THE ENGLISH NOVEL AND THE 1914-18 WAR

Michael S. Greicus

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PREFACE

The Twentieth Century and Western Civilization have proved a formidable combination for literary critics intent on tracing the progression of fiction into the here and now. Not only is our present moment too near and too much a part of the events of the last fifty years to have a time-simplified perspective of its origins, it suffers no interpretation without a recognition of an unequalled mass of material, of preserved statistics and memories and opinion which are as contradictory as human experience itself. The present study is intended as one step in the sorting out of this material. It is an examination of the very close relationship between fiction and a particular period of national stress, an association which forms a distinct phase of the contemporary British literary scene.

The First World War played an important role in the development of what is now termed "The Modern Novel," and one which offers a much more tangible record of its effects on literature than have other facets of contemporary society. Because of the duration and impact of this great historical tragedy, creative writers in Britain could hardly avoid coming to terms with the war and its implications. During the four years this was quite apparent in the work that was produced. Afterwards,

the total effects of the conflict on British society and on the novel itself gradually came to be revealed. More and more fiction written out of the residue of combat and service experience began to appear until by 1929 there was a "revival" of interest in the conflict and publishing lists were flooded with such material. This "revival" continued into the early thirties, when the number of war books began to diminish but never quite abated. Today, forty years after the Armistice, novels on the First World War are still appearing, and they are likely to continue doing so for some time to come. However, the writings of those who actually experienced the struggle are almost complete, and it is these works--novels which were made of the stuff of the writer's own time in terms of his own time--which play the largest part in the history of the English Novel.

In examining British fiction written during or about the war it has been impossible to consider every publication on the subject (even by 1930 the Imperial War Museum contained some 50,000 such books). Rather, it was necessary to concentrate on those works which are representative of their counterparts and which merit distinction as fiction of more than ordinary calibre.

Foreign novels on the war have been introduced only where they seem to have had a direct effect on the British reading

public of the time, or on the English Novel itself. Thus, a great many parallels which might have been drawn, but which in themselves would be more relevant in a study of comparative literature, have been avoided. British war fiction offers a more than ample scope, and it is with this that the present study attempts to deal.

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PRELIMINARIES

> Fiction is history, human history, or it is nothing. But it is also more than that, it stands on firmer ground, being based on the reality of forms and the observation of social phenomena, whereas history is based on documents . . . on second-hand impressions.
> J. Conrad, Notes on Life and Letters

One of the most recognizable qualities of Western culture around the First World War is the failure of traditional values and consequent disintegration of uniform belief. A stable, well-ordered universe seems to have given way to a holocaust of confused revelations and broken dogmas. And nothing really developed out of the ruins of 1918 that could parallel the stability of that lost Victorian culture. This motif appears again and again in the literature of the time and it suggests that the writers of this age, upon being deprived of a common medium of values with their audience by the breakdown of Victorian ethics, attempted an adjustment between literature and the then existent state of transition in civilization.

It is important to note the very close relationship that exists between the novel and this particular age, for it is a key to the form's complex development around the war. For the continuance of a literary tradition such as characterized the novel in the Nineteenth Century, both the writers and their audiences must share a common set of values, a philosophical "world-view," the ethics of which are taken for granted. Generally speaking, one may say that the early

years of the Twentieth Century, in contrast with the Victorian era, were lacking in such a schematization, and that the result was a tendency on the part of modern writers to establish their own subjective values in the gap that was left. Method was one of the easiest means to this end, and the rise of consciousness writing with its attendant screening and selectivity of experience witnesses this. What may be of the highest importance in a culture's moral attitude often all but loses its significance in minute acts of consciousness, and something much more trivial may be magnified into a mainspring of action. The values of the individual mind take the place of those preconceptions the writer is no longer sure of. But method is not the only way to achieve this. Placing the action outside the normal limits of society also frees the writer from the problem of objective values. The regimen of war, for instance, imposes upon the individual its own code of behavior, one entirely different from that which is practicable in peaceful occupations; consequently there need be no absolute dependency on a common ground of values between author and audience. Battlefield behavior can be "introduced" by the author as an entity to be explained.

This transition from a more or less objective reality to one obviously subjective has been written of quite often, yet it must be considered only as a working rule of thumb in a delineation of

the novel against its backdrop of history. Novels are the work of individuals, not of generations. Such literary terms as "Victorian," "Edwardian," and "post-war" belong to the province of criticism and not intrinsically to any fiction classified under them. What they do offer, however, is a means of examining trends of fiction in terms of the zeitgeists behind them--and the Teutonic conception of zeitgeist, or time spirit, had entered with a vengeance into literature at the turn of the century.[1]

Queen Victoria's death and the subsequent accession of Edward VII represent for the social historian, stumbling in a welter of ideas still too near the present to have been simplified by time, a tangible transformation to cite in his quest after the definition of these zeitgeists. Certainly at the turn of the century a new spirit had arisen with the lifetime of the middle generation, and had begun to flower in the few years before the war. Literature bears this out as well as any political, economic, or social tracing of the era; in fact, it may be used to enliven the perceptions and judgements of any critique produced in connection

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1. The Oxford Standard English Dictionary cites the date of the first appearance of the German term in an English construction as 1893. Every age has its zeitgeist and it is perceptible in the age's literature. But only in the Twentieth Century did it become a conscious intent of novelists to portray their own time in terms of their own time. Thus, the full implications of the zeitgeist within novels written around the first war extend to their form as well as their content.

with that germination of our modern world. In the novel what is especially noticeable is the intense contemporaneity that infected it then. The shimmering backdrop of society against which individuals struggled and came into existence ceased to be inextricably caught up in manners which were all too often taken for granted, and began to take shape as a reflection of reality (that quality which so concerned James) in our modern analytic sense of the word; the individual, too, came under a more intense scrutiny and as Mrs. Grundy's great taboo was eased off the novel's shoulders, writers were able to handle more varied, less "conventional" material--the novel, that is to say, was moving with the time.

By 1902 the stability of a society entrenched in a long Indian summer of peaceful isolation and prosperity was an uncertain, a nebulous consolation in the face of an unsuccessful Boer campaign comprised of humiliating and drawn-out tactical failures by the much larger British forces. Germany had openly displayed her enmity toward England as early as 1896. The famous Kruger telegram from the Kaiser, congratulating Transvaal's premier on having quashed that early raid of Dr. Jameson's six hundred Uitlanders, had sketched the open breach between the two inter-related houses of Europe. Two years later a German naval law had been passed with the avowed intention, stated in its preamble, of

challenging the supremacy of "even the mightiest naval antagonist." There was no mistaking the meaning of that, nor what it spelt for the future.

At home the dominant middle class, from the 1870's onward, had suffered an increasing assault on its established ideal of "respectability," and as its intellectual biases and limitations were pointed out by dissenters its jurisdiction of taste had proportionately declined. Stiffer international competion in commerce and industry combined with the rise of labor as a political and economic force to challenge that middle-class pre-eminence which had come into existence with the industrial revolution. Religion underwent similar pressures. The evangelical strain that had come to be characteristic of the period was affronted with a bewilderingly varied assault by scientific scepticism, ritualism, philosophic doubt, Biblical criticism and just ordinary hedonism.

Yet another revolution was taking place in the material sphere, one which as it gained momentum affected every aspect of society in varying degrees. While new formulations of scientific theory were playing havoc with Victorian rationalism and its attendant Darwinian cult, the resulting material developments began to permeate all levels of society. Mass production enabled every village eleven to wear flannels, and even Mrs. Mop had an opportunity to

mime the ladies above the stairs. The internal combustion engine was about to transform individual locomotion, although it was not until the middle of Edward's reign that the effects were felt with all their moral implications. No ethical system could have kept pace with the scientific progress that became evident to all and sundry in the years around the turn of the century. The breach was formed, and it was gradually augmenting itself in the face of all opposition. In fact the state of things to come after the war was already an inevitability.

Queen Victoria had never ridden in a motor car nor seen an airplane, and during her reign no sane Englishman could have considered accepting the changes to social institutions such as the "Victorian Sunday" that these and other innovations caused. She belonged to another world, this "most respectable of Queens," as Lytton Strachey termed her. When she died it could be fairly written that

> It was not the little woman in the coffin whose passing had drawn vast crowds to stand in awestruck silence under a bleak February sky, but something more like that procession of the lost hours, bearing Time to his tomb in eternity. It was the Nineteenth Century that was heard passing in the rumble of the gun-carriage wheels, attended by all the pomp and majesty of an old order that was already beginning to yield place to the new.[1]

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1. Esmé Wingfield-Stratford, Victorian Aftermath, (1933), p. 2.

It was a cliche of the time that it was a period of transition. But, as Esmé Wingfield-Stratford suggests, "this rather implied that there was somewhere to go, whereas all that was really certain was that the old order of things had been left definitely behind."[1]

Change was in the air, and the major novelists enlivening the scene of Edward's England were full of it. Joseph Conrad, Arnold Bennett, H. G. Wells, John Galsworthy, all touched heavily upon it. It was as if this disintegration, this transition, this re-evaluation--call it what you will--had gained the stature of a whole generation's world-view.

Like animals in their natural habitat the moral and social and economic and political biases of the age were ill-defined and accepted as integral to their environment until they began to shift against the backdrop of their own dogmatic certainties; movement focused attention upon them. It was inevitable that this transformation, going hand in hand with the dissatisfaction and unrest pervading England at the turn of the century, should find its way into the novel and react upon not only its content, but form and intent as well. This so elusive, yet real spirit of change residing in every sphere of life ushered in a new concept

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1. Ibid., p. 155.

of the world. The existence of such a thing as permanence began to be called in doubt. It gave way to a sort of universal lack of fixity, a new recognition of the significance of chance. The writer, as Bonamy Dobree and Edith Batho conclude in their study of the pre-war period, "is always concerned for the quality of life as it is lived in his day, and . . . he is intensely aware of the currents of thought and feeling which animate his fellows." They go on to suggest, however, that there are periods when the actual is "too strident, too harsh, too uncertain, to allow of that quiet gestation which is essential to great works of art; and that is why the Edwardian and early Georgian periods, though they produced works of great energy, of brilliance even and of impeccable earnestness, seem shallower than those of the Victorian period."[1]

Whether or not one agrees with such a sweeping value judgement, it does seem quite certain that this "harsh, strident and uncertain" time governed its writers in their quests for the old verities. Joseph Conrad, Englishman by adoption and Edwardian by chance, looms the largest of these writers; and in spite of a tendency on

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1. Bonamy Dobree and Edith Batho, The Victorians and After, (1950), p. 127.

the part of some critics to look to his formative years for a clue to his fiction,[1] he is as representative as any of his contemporaries of the mood of the whole nation. Moreover, it is this very sounding of the contemporary scene which made his best work, Nostromo, Chance, and The Secret Agent possible. And it is the first-named novel that is most representative of the pre-war years of the present century. In fact, Nostromo might be termed a "curtain-raiser" not only to modern fiction, but to modern, war-racked society itself.

It is one of the many irreverent little ironies of the Twentieth Century that the eclipse of an Anglicized American high on the boards of the English novel--and in the matter of form, at the top--should coincide with the rise in his place of a Polish master-mariner who reached far beyond the bounds of Empire for his subject matter. Joseph Conrad had been living in England only a decade when Nostromo, his chef d'oeuvre, was published. The remainder of his 47 years had been spent in Poland and at sea. But from his first novel, Almeyer's Folly (1895), it was obvious that this man was dealing with more than adventure in

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1. Dr. Gustav Morf's The Polish Heritage of Joseph Conrad, (1930), examines the novels in the light of psychological motifs which may well have been the fiction's basis in Conrad the man, but are for the most part a priori comments--as is the case with most Freudian literary criticism.

the nether regions of the globe. The exotic settings, seemingly as far from the precints of Europe as the fantasies of H. G. Wells were from the then present moment, offered Conrad the means of examining his characters more intensively than would have been possible if they had been set into a much larger, more representative society. In the Malayan Straits or on a ship at sea an isolated community could exist, preserving for its members a world in microcosm that portrays not the manners of a particular society, but human motives and moral responsibilities. The few simple ideas, "so simple that they must be as old as the hills," which are referred to in his often quoted preface to A Personal Record become all-important in such a setting. These pure ideas of virtue, pity, honesty, courage, and fidelity were much more predominant where all action was viewed apart from the existence of that extensive world in which heroes and heroines tended only to bob to the surface for the length of a tale and then be lost from sight in the ceaseless progression of time through society--the notable intention of Meredith and Eliot, among others. The outposts of civilization invoked a curious sort of finality for the life that was portrayed there. But they also gave witness to the exacting price civilization in decline forced from her exponents.

Heart of Darkness, published in 1902 along with two other narratives, Youth and The End of the Tether, is a classic example of this sort of fiction dealing as it does with both the small group in isolation, and with the very recognizable forces of the modern world. In it a macabre revelation takes place, one exposing the dark forms beneath the surface of the European idea of "progress," by which the treacherous and sadistic methods of greedy men exploiting natives and land were excused. Mr. Kurtz, the enigma of the story, rises slowly from Marlow's narrative of his duties as the captain of a Congo steamer. The esteemed agent of a great company, energetic and clever, Kurtz occupies the farthest outpost in the heart of the jungle. He is the epitome of success, but when Marlow undertakes a trip upriver intimations of a savagery and horror in the man begin to form the vision of an able ivory trader into one of a corrupted parasite. In Marlow's mind a gradual identification of himself with Mr. Kurtz and his horrible practices brings out an ironic problem of responsibility, for the former is a personification of all that is good and just in "progress." By the close of the story the two have become inseparable qualities in Marlow's mind, and he acknowledges the debt he owes to the victimized exploiter of a system of progress.

But this was still far from home and the immediate problems of a society that continued to reap the benefits of colonization

while avoiding most of its responsibilities. A much more recognizably "contemporary" Conrad appeared in the years following his collaboration with a young English writer, Ford Madox Hueffer. Their first joint effort appeared in 1901. The Inheritors was more fantasy than realist fiction, but it was set in England and dealt with a new type of mortal who--though he and his kind existed in a supernatural fourth dimension--had a striking resemblance to that new breed of financiers growing out of society at the turn of the century.

This was followed with the rewriting of a half-finished Hueffer novel, "Seraphina." While most of The Inheritors, including the idea for the book, was the work of Hueffer, "Seraphina" reworked by the two men contained long passages by Conrad. The scene was England and the Caribbean at the beginning of the Nineteenth Century, and it was exactly what its new title implies--Romance. It was a work of blazing imagination, studded with adventure and action that were magnificently caught in the color and shifting illumination of impressionistic writing. In short, it was what Conrad's small public looked for and expected

rather than the heavy moral analyses of men and environment that characterized his work.

Previously, he had relied on his own past experience for the larger part of his subject matter. Here, he was to leave his past for a new vista. After the volume of short stories under the title Typhoon (1903) Conrad had arrived at a point where "it seemed somehow that there was nothing more in the world to write about." Nostromo developed into something entirely new for him. "Perhaps," he states in his 1917 preface to the novel, "there was never any change, except in that mysterious, extraneous thing which has nothing to do with theories of art; a subtle change in the nature of inspiration."[1] As it developed, Conrad's inspiration had interlocked itself with his own time.

The first hint for the tale, as with so many of his stories, came in the shape of an anecdote "completely destitute of valuable details." A sailor's autobiography which he found in a bookstore gave him a reacquaintance with this hint and led to the "first vision of a twilight country which was to become the province of Sulaco, with its high shadowy Sierra and its misty Campo for mute witnesses of events flowing from the passions of men short-sighted

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1. Joseph Conrad, Nostromo, (1917), Introduction, p. vii.

in good and evil."[1] What resulted from a meditation upon these beginnings is no simple Latin American extravaganza set in the past. Conrad had rolled back the curtain of the present to display the Twentieth Century to itself. Yet his effort went almost unnoticed by its readers. It was not a popular novel. Revolution, intrigue, subtle financial and political intrusions, blind idealism, pure materialistic motivations, a society disordered to its very roots, carefully woven into a complex narrative created to intensify the minute examination of the Sulacan microcosm and make it an organic structure, did not please a society preferring overt ideas in novels to the sort of subtlety that was identified with French work. The popularity of the propagandists Shaw and Wells amply demonstrated the taste of the literary-minded at the time.[2]

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1. Ibid., Introduction, p. ix.

2. Richard Curle wrote of the novel in an early study (1914) of Conrad: "It is a book singularly little known and one which many people find a difficulty in reading (probably owing to the confused way in which time is indicated), but it is one of the most astounding 'tours de force' in all literature." Richard Curle, Joseph Conrad, p. 40. Conrad himself wrote in the edition sent to T. J. Wise: "This novel was written for 'Harpers' who bought it unseen. Never serialized in the United States. Serialized in England by 'T. P.'s Weekly' to the great annoyance of its readers, who wrote many letters complaining of so much space being taken by utterly unreadable stuff. Fell flat on publication in book form. Reprinted with success since, and now generally considered as my greatest creative effort." T. J. Wise, op. cit., p. 10.

Nostromo, because of its complexity, is a difficult work to grasp. That certain narrowness of range implied by his "intensive" studies does not exist in the reconstruction of the affairs of Sulaco. They involve a multitude of men representing as many modern facets of life. There are South American politicians, revolutionaries, a Garibaldian idealist, an Italian seaman, an American financier, Anglo-Saxon entrepreneurs, and a Parisian journalist, among others. Behind them all Conrad has drawn the overbearing forces that are the intangible mechanisms of the Twentieth Century. The epigraph from Shakespeare on the fly-leaf might have been a prophetic comment on the whole of Europe in 1904: "So foul a sky clears not without a storm." Indeed, it did not and it should be noted that the "tale of the seaboard," as Conrad termed the novel, closes under the same dark poncho of clouds on the Gulfo Placido that were described in the beginning of the novel and under which so much of the action takes place. Only Nostromo with a handful of characters, and not the forces behind the silver interests, had been brought to their logical conclusion. In the last chapters there are hints of other revolutions to come.

But first Conrad creates an imaginary republic, Costaguana, which is typical of the unsettled Latin American countries. The novel opens with an impersonal description of its most isolated and prosperous province, unique in the possession of a silver mine and a natural harbour while being almost inaccessible by land. The

impressionistic style--to some extent vivified by the association with Hueffer, a man equally concerned with method--works at giving the same impression to the reader that everyday life does, and chronological sequence is completely discarded. More will be said of that later, but in the furtherance of his plot this scheme of using Sulaco and the silver as a center toward which the other figures of the novel are drawn enables Conrad to suggest the motivations behind characters even as he introduces them. Like a man describing something very familiar he elaborates and colors his scenes according to the different feelings they create. Yet it is only an impression produced by the prose. Irony is implicit in almost every line of the work, and the reader is swept along to the final conclusion as much as if there had been a chronological sequence of events each leading to the next and so on into the last, fatal irony of chance.

Conrad himself has described the silver as the main figure of the novel:

> Silver is the pivot of the moral and material events, affecting the lives of everybody in the tale. That this was my deliberate purpose there can be no doubt . . . the word "silver" occurs almost at the beginning of the story proper, and I took care to introduce it in the very last paragraph, which would perhaps have been better without the phrase which contains the key word.[1]

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1. Douglas Hewitt, Conrad: A Reassessment, (1952), p. 54; quoted in a letter of 7th March, 1923, to Ernst Bendz.

It is the silver which introduces modern material interests to Sulaco and renews the political ambitions of her temperamental citizens. The chronological beginning of the novel comes at the moment when a young Englishman, Charles Gould, is stirred by a vague idea of rehabilitating the mine concession which had caught his father up in a web of politics and eventually destroyed him. He is able to do this, but finds it necessary to make the silver a political force. Too many dishonest finance ministers, whose usual tenure in office is only a few months until the next revolution sweeps the country, drain the mine's profits; the railroad and foreign investment brought by the silver also require stability for their success. The whole romantic idea of the mine even draws for Gould's activities the support of its major financier; and with the political involvement comes the deluge.

The American financier is a masterpiece in miniature in the novel, and is characteristic of the whole of Conrad's technique in Nostromo. One short speech describes not only the man but the prototype he represents in the modern scene, and is worth citing here as an example of Conrad's mastery of psychology and the purveying of it in a few terse sentences which make the figure symbol as well:

> Now, what is Costaguana? It is the bottomless pit of 10 per cent loans and other fool investments. European capital had been flung into it with both hands for years. Not ours though. We in this country [America] we know just about enough to keep indoors when it rains. We can sit and watch. Of course, some day we shall step in. We are bound to. But there's no hurry. Time itself has got to wait on the greatest country in the whole of God's universe. We shall be giving the word for everything: industry, trade, law, journalism, art, politics, and religion, from Cape Horn clear over to Smith's Sound, and beyond, too, if anything worth taking hold of turns up at the North Pole. And then we shall have the leisure to take in hand the outlying islands and continents of the earth. We shall run the world's business whether the world likes it or not. The world can't help it--and neither can we, I guess.[1]

The idealized material interest of the mine which comes to replace Gould's love for his wife gains support from even the most hopeful of the small province's freedom lovers. Don Jose' Avellanos' ideal is ironically interpreted by his general:

> That is what Don Jose' says we must do. Be enterprising! Work! Grow rich! To put Montero in a cage is my work; and when that insignificant piece of business is done, then as Don Jose' wishes us, we shall grow rich, one and all, like so many Englishmen, because it's money that saves a country.[2]

With the novel's namesake Conrad displays the corrupting influence of the silver on the personal level--again in an ironic manner--for it is not so much a desire for wealth that leads

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1. Conrad, Nostromo, pp. 76-77.

2. Ibid., p. 164.

Nostromo, the Italian Capitaz de Cargadores, idol of the people, to taking the silver, as a disillusionment with the common people who fail to fully notice the deed he performs without thought of material gain and in pure vanity.

Decoud, the clear-sighted French journalist who initiates the birth of Occidental Province as an independent nation under the auspices of the silver interests, can cynically evaluate the motives of each member of the country, but it is not enough to sustain his life when he is completely alone with the silver while the revolution is in progress on the mainland. Taking four ingots of the "incorruptible" metal in his pockets, he kills himself and disappears into the depths of the ocean. The load of silver brings about the destruction of the absolute realist without any scheme of values simply because of the problems that its existence entails.

In the end, none of those involved can avoid the responsibility brought about by their relationship to the material interests. Each of the central characters, with the exception of Decoud's fiancee and old Viola, has his or her weakness exploited by the metal, either as the symbol of wealth or as the tool of political and personal idealism. The other two must suffer from its effects on their surroundings, much as the innocent and uninvolved were to suffer from the war.

As has been suggested already, the novel's last chapters suggest no note of finality; the new-found political power of the citizens of Sulaco is breeding further chaos, and behind it all the material interest remains, still ready to be invoked for the causes of idealism and to corrupt the hearts of its servants. It is a nightmare world in which, as Gould says, "Liberty, democracy, patriotism, government--all of them have a flavor of folly and murder." His sentiment was to be a favorite truism for the disillusioned after 1918, and that is the true mark of Conrad's contemporaneity.

Technique counts very much in any consideration of Nostromo, for it is by his method that Conrad conveys his truisms. The ironies of juxtaposition and implicit relationships among the characters are thus off-set and by them the pure adventure of the narrative is kept under control. In this novel, especially, the traditional and realistically limited pattern of strong situations, connected more or less chronologically, was not at all in evidence. Here, the influence of Henry James and the Nineteenth-Century French writers had led Conrad to a new conception of the old problem of form. But in Nostromo he had envisioned more than an organic form with every phrase, every word, furthering the author's intent. He wanted also to reproduce the general effect that life makes on the mind. There is no rattling narrative sweeping us from birth to our not very carefully

machined but predestined glory; life comes to the observer in episodes which extend backwards and forwards, each colouring slightly the one before it until a whole picture is formed. By rendering the affair through particular, not necessarily connected, impressions that create the one embroilment, one set of embarrassments, one psychological progress, Conrad had introduced a new facet of "realism" into English tradition, and one, it should be noticed, that was to dominate the novel some twenty years later.

Nostromo has the makings of a superb romantic adventure, but the many opportunities there are to exaggerate the pure action and create overly-strong situations of suspense have been disregarded. The last chapters, in fact, open with an indirect recital of the events past the germain action, and then gradually reveal the final working out of the plot. In this way the reader is left unhampered to observe the moral effects of the story and so comes away with an impression of the complex moral structure of the novel, as well as the experience of an adventure on the seaboard. This is not to say that suspense is discarded; rather, it is given an added but more subtle twang for the perceptive reader.

Not since Lawrence Sterne had produced his inimitable Tristam Shandy had the novel been so bandied about in respect to its forerunners and their traditions. Being something so new

with only a slight affinity to its closest English relative, the work of James, it was inevitable that Nostromo should have met with little popularity upon its publication. To suggest, however, that Conrad can be dismissed as being outside the English tradition is no just evaluation of tradition itself. Authors do not come into existence within a literary vacuum. They belong to a historical setting, if to anything, and their genius expresses itself through that. As Conrad himself has put it, the novelist's first virtue "is the exact understanding of the limits traced by the reality of his time to the play of his invention." And he added later that inspiration "comes from the earth, which has a past, a history, a future, not from the cold and immutable heaven."[1] In light of the writers that were to follow Conrad it seems unjust to say that his re-evaluations of form were an exception to the rule in English literary tradition. Hueffer, in fact, was to employ the same methods as a mean between the extremes of the stream-of-consciousness school and the "more public" narrative approach. Both the content and form of Nostromo were products of their time, and of England as well as of Europe in "the brave free days of destroyed landmarks, while the ingenius

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1. Joseph Conrad, A Personal Record, (1916), p. 182.

minds [were] busy inventing the forms of the new beacons."[1] Truly, with Nostromo the Twentieth Century as it is known today had arrived and had been ushered into the novel.

Wells, Bennett, and Galsworthy, the other three major Edwardian novelists, also were very sensitive to the convolutions of their time. Each in his own way had, in fact, caught in prose the problems of modern society and had tried to deal with them honestly. Wells, forever the Utopian and sociologist, had not only valued contemporaneity in fiction, but had identified himself with a myriad of new causes that were to lift England out of the Victorian doldrums. Bennett, on the other hand, was just as concerned in his serious novels with contemporaneity, but whereas Wells was a preacher, a politician, and a prophet, Bennett in his art settled for the capturing of the present in terms of absolute reality. He was the forerunner of Christopher Isherwood's, "I am a camera with its shutter open, quite passive, recording, not thinking,"[2] with his very sharp portraits of provincial life in the Five Towns. Galsworthy also strove for contemporaneity

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1. Ibid., p. 183.

2. Christopher Isherwood, Goodbye to Berlin, (1945), p. 7.

in his portraits of a dying middle class. But reality and symbol became interchangeable in his fiction, and by that much he presented a more complex and modern picture of his time in A Man of Property (1911).

These three novelists, like Conrad, seemed to pack their work with the problems that had been introduced with the passing of the old order. Even Wells, the perennial optimist, had produced one work which foresaw only the worst effects of the machine age. Tono-Bungay (1909) describes an aristocracy that is dying and corrupt, and the arrival of the new rich to take their place. His portrait of the rather simple man thrust into high finance is obviously borrowed directly from the life of a real man who caused one of the major scandals of the time, one Whittaker Wright.[1] For all Wells' charges about the insufficiency of British society in this process of social replacement, there is very little that is positive in the novel. Its most striking feature--perhaps its most modern one as well--is the horrible sterility of its central figures. Wells, the Utopian, in his best piece of fiction was not unaware of the crisis progress was forcing on his world, and he could write of it in a vein that is quite similar to the lament of the post-war disillusioned.

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1. This was a common theme in Edwardian literature. Joseph Conrad, in Chance, created a figure based on Wright, and collaborated as well with Hueffer (Ford) in a short psychological study of the type, The Nature of a Crime. He figures also in the character of the hero of Bennett's The Regent.

These Edwardian novelists were even more reflective of another particular change which society was undergoing, and which was to be resolved by the war. In their personal lives, as in their novels, there were continual conflicts with the established code of sexual morality, conflicts very much symptomatic of the Edwardian and Neo-Georgian era. Galsworthy's Irene Forsyte goes through difficulties in A Man of Property which had a rough parallel with the author's own personal experiences with his cousin. Bennett developed in his Clayhanger Trilogy a somewhat similar theme involving the intricacies of modern relations between the sexes. And Wells apparently went so far as to take his own writing on free love seriously. So each in his own way was contravening the old order while offering nothing very stable to replace it. Their introduction in fiction of the problem of personal morality as opposed to a more or less defunct public one may even be said to have paved the way for the "new" ideas of the young after the war.

Seen against the background of this general disintegration of values, the First World War seems as much a symptom of the universal unrest of the Twentieth Century as a cause of it. In fact, it is almost impossible to separate causes and effects in the present century, if only because new philosophical revelations of physicist and biologist alike allow no simple system for the analysis of history. Space-time and concepts of duration have confused, if

not eliminated, causal relationships in this era. And the novel is history as well, albeit human history, so the threads of its development are as complex as the time it was written in. Yet the imprint of the war on literature is a very tangible thing, for it appears as much in subject matter as in influences. And it is this sort of tangible interpretation of their time by novelists which can be most accurately traced and discussed.

II

THE WAR YEARS: FIRST PHASE

Remember happy England: keep
For her bright cause thy latest breath;
Her peace that long hath lulled asleep
May now exact the sleep of death
W. de la Mare (1914)

The note of exaggerated idealism that characterized the opening of the First World War in Britain cannot be too highly stressed. The newspaper headlines were straightforward enough that damp August bank holiday:

AT WAR WITH GERMANY

Summary Rejection of Ultimatum

Declaration by Great Britain

GERMAN ACTION

invasion and fighting in Belgium begun

SEA AND LAND BATTLES

But there lay behind them an appeal that swept the whole country into a proudly optimistic state, into a fair belief in the invincible right of Britain's cause. For literature, such a state was doubly significant, not only because it was mirrored in the fiction and poetry alike of the immediate period, but because it prepared the way for violent disillusion that was to come out of the literature of the years to follow.

The leaders on that August 5th contained no startling surprises. Five days of conditioning had been at work upon their destined audience's eye; and before that there had been an acclimatization period of at least twenty years. In fact, it

would not have been unusual to have heard among other things that morning a sigh of relief that a single all-absorbing cause had removed the uncertainty of threats against and assaults upon a faded but comprehensible norm.

However, this is speculation about something ephemeral, and humans never quite seem to agree from one moment to the next about what they think they have thought. A novel offers a more permanent body of opinion for analysis, one directly applicable to that insubstantial quality which the Twentieth Century has termed the zeitgeist. Its eventual arrival before the public involves not only the novelist but numerous honest editors and other diviners of public taste, thus giving to the form a further credence as a gauge of the moment. That in the Twentieth Century this is especially true during periods of national stress will be borne out by an examination of the 1914-18 period, and when that strain extends over four years the novel, both as an individual achievement and as a form, becomes a sort of emotional seismograph recording even the minutest tremors of its subjects.

During the war years the interrelationship of fact and fiction was intensified by the common field of experience that writers shared, either on the front or at home. To be sure, from the very beginnings of the English novel, authors had found their

material in public sources. And it must be remembered that the Edwardian novelists had done their bit to further this tradition by using in common such topics as the debacle of Whittaker Wright.

The war, however, was not something a writer could choose to deal with or disregard in any specific contemplation of contemporary society. In his preface to the combined edition of Sinister Street, Sir Compton Mackenzie draws attention to the disastrous effects it had upon the trilogies both he and Hugh Walpole were in the process of writing, and goes on to speculate that they were not alone in this experience. The gulf between the past of July, 1914, and the present of war-time England was growing just as was the one between civilians in the New Armies and their home-front counterparts--which the fiction of the moment was primarily concerned with.[1] These works suggested the necessity of a new set of values to interpret soldiering, and after August fiction in general was finding "time in the novel" a very jealous mistress in her demands. A case in point was Mrs. Humphrey Ward's Delia Blanchflower, a novel about suffragettes which appeared in January, 1915. Mrs. Ward was a very popular and prolific writer with a reading public

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1. See below, pp. 47-50.

that no publisher could profitably ignore. Yet, being published so early in the war, Delia Blanchflower would seem to have been a financial gamble. One has only to examine its reviews to understand why; but more than that these criticisms offer a key to the novelist's dilemma in 1914-15. One such critic began his review of the novel with the statement,

> Between the England of last July and the England of the present moment there lies a gulf that can never be bridged. Everything that happened before the war began seems almost to have taken place in some previous existence, of which our memories, though clear, are very distant. And after reading the first chapter of Mrs. Humphrey Ward's new novel one has a feeling that this is going to be a historical novel--a tale of events that happened long ago and of issues that have long been settled and put away, not an imaginative representation of ideas and deeds that are of present moment and await a future reckoning. Can it be . . . so short a time since we were all afire about the "suffragettes," "the wild women," the outrages on property and peace committed by people whom it seemed impossible to punish and impossible to reclaim--we, who are now in daily contemplation of far graver outrages by an enemy far more stubborn and far more inflamed by the rage of impotence. Woman and her freaks of temper . . . what concern have we with them today? There are greater things to think of.[1]

But there were other things to be considered in examining the sort of contemporaneity forced upon novelists. Publishers and writers alike were not slow to discover the worth of comment on

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1. Times Literary Supplement, January 28, 1915, p. 28.

Armageddon, and though the mass of fiction and non-fiction may have had its genesis in the undertones of the then popular war slogan, "Business as Usual," as well as in a surge of patriotic feeling and need for self-expression, quite a lot of what was produced is valuable both as literature and as social documentary.

The only immediate fear of the publishing trade that August was of a shortage of paper. Experience during the South African campaign seemed to suggest that book-making would be relatively free of any curtailment in war time.[1] By the end of 1914, however, Armageddon's full weight had made itself felt, and the "Three Weeks War," far from dragging on three months,

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1. In the first issue of the Times Literary Supplement after the declaration of war this paragraph appeared under the "Notes" column: "The war has naturally thrown a heavy cloud over the prospects of the autumn publishing season. It is worth remembering, however, that the South African War did not prove so disastrous to the book trade as many people had anticipated. During the critical year of 1900--a year of war and gravest national anxieties--the books published were only 418 fewer than those of 1898. It was only in fiction that the total for 1900 showed a very marked falling off, novels dropping from 1,825 to 1,563. The obvious result of times of national peril is that the reading public shows a tendency to draw away from works of imagination and mere amusement to the literature of thought and history," Times Literary Supplement, August 6, 1914, p. 378. This was to prove accurate to some extent, although the length of the war did greatly diminish the number of new books as it dragged on. The almost negligible proportionate decline of new fiction during the years 1914-18 can be observed in the publication table in the Appendix.

seemed likely to last at least a year. The Boer Campaign's "year of gravest national anxiety" was beginning to take on an air of frivolity in comparison with a conflict which in five weeks after it began had absorbed 439,000 civilians into a "new" British army that was comprised of a total of 1,200,000 regulars, territorials, and volunteers, and soon would require five times this amount.

The price of paper jumped in the middle of August and manufacturers for the book trade were threatened with a temporary closure until fresh supplies of pulp were forthcoming. But this did not handicap the publishers' realization of the new market that had materialized, and from the first week of the conflict onwards books with the "ring of war" were cascaded upon the public.[1] Non-fiction, of course, dominated the lists. But

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1. In this the publishers were performing a public service as well, and they were so successful that in July of 1918 the New York Publishers' Weekly was able to vigorously defend the publication of books as an essential industry. "Enormous help," it remarked, "has been given to the British Government in the prosecution of the war by the books which inform and stimulate both the public and the army to continue until final triumph a war which is for the salvation of democracy, a democracy which has been made possible through the centuries of modern history, only by the developments of the printing press. . . . It is only necessary to remind readers of the great impetus given to public opinion by books on the war and the great help given by books on military and engineering science to the soldiers, to realize how much this means, and if it is suggested that fiction, if nothing else, may well be suppressed--How about Mr. Britling Sees It Through? Has any one thing done more in proportion to stimulate public interest and stiffen public appreciation for the great efforts of the Allies than this one 'novel'?" Quoted in Bookseller, July, 1918, p. 307.

in the field of the novel the last weeks of August made marketable stocks of prophetic literature that had been published as far back as the eighties. At least 31 volumes of this nature were in circulation by the end of December, among them, Wells' three fantasies: The Time Machine, The War of the Worlds, and The War in the Air.

The titles of some of these imaginative works are interesting testaments to public feeling; they demonstrate very well the unsettled atmosphere of Europe after 1870. William Le Quex's The Great War in England, 1891 and The Invasion of 1910, both written prophetically, suggest a fear in the public's mind, as does H. H. Munro's humorous diatribe on the same theme, When William Came (1913).

The earliest war fiction depended on this same material. By a happy chance Patrick Vaux's collection of novel adventures, Sea, Salt and Cordite was ready for release in early October, and was among the first new works of imagination to profit from the general preoccupation with the war. The tales that make up the book are of very poor quality, depending on hairbreadth escapes, impossible adventure and spy disguises for their denouements, but the subject matter was certainly "topical." Perhaps the most striking, and at the same time characteristic, adventure centers around a bluejacket who "hurled" himself from the upper mainyards of a cruiser into a passing German airship. And

it should be noted that such enthusiasm was very characteristic not only of war fiction but of the nation itself in the first months of the war.

There were writers of merit as well in this unexpected vanguard. D. H. Lawrence's volume of stories under the title The Prussian Officer profited from its timeliness--it was published in November, 1914--although only the first two stories deal with anything remotely akin to German militarism.

Direct reports from the front began in the same month to reach the publishing houses, first in the form of compiled reports and collections by journalists of soldiers' letters.[1] This period also produced the first work on the war by the two stalwarts of Edwardian literature, who deftly turned their hands to what has to be called propaganda. For H. G. Wells it was no new trick, and The War That Will End War contained little more than refurbished

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1. E. A. Powell's Fighting in Flanders and A. St. J. Adcock's In the Firing Line are readable accounts by professional journalists, the first book being a commentary by an American eyewitness on both sides of the front, and the second a connected account of the B. E. F. compiled from actual records by soldiers involved. Typical of those based on letters from the front in this period are: War Stories of Private Thomas Atkins: A Selection of the Best Things in His Personal Letters from the Front and F. J. Fraser's Deeds That Will Never Die: Stories of Heroism in the Great War.

essays which advocated such things as the abolition of "Kruppism" (the manufacture of arms by private firms) and anticipated the problems of peace. Wells was especially adamant about the "unnecessary" mistrust felt by some liberals for the power and aims of Russia, and was one of the many who set about to reconcile East and West. Arnold Bennett's Liberty: A Statement of the British Case was not an anticipation of the events that would come with peace (which, it should be noted, were long delayed), but a vindication of Britain's part in the conflict, arguing that the war was not only being waged against Germany but against the whole conception of war.[1]

Both books were somewhat characteristic of the feeling prevalent during these first months. Even during the extension of the trench system to the sea, people expected a quick victory. The German failure at the Marne had seemed decisive, to journalists at least, who spoke of it as the "retreat which may well prove the climax of the war." Thus Wells' plea for a conclusive peace was of great interest. At the same time the continued drive for more enlistments was thriving not by calls to the spirit of adventure alone. Patriotism and a holy war served as a motive for most of

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1. G. K. Chesterton followed them into print a week later with The Barbarism of Berlin, attacking atrocities in a satiric vein and generally unburdening his soul on Germany and the war. He offered the same sort of spirited encouragement to the Allied cause as had Bennett in his essay.

the volunteers, and Bennett's book offered, among other things, a justifiable vindication of Britain's involvement. It is misleading to assume that such arguements were required by the public, but it should not be forgotten that not many British newspapers had evinced sympathy for Serbia's behaviour before Great Britain was drawn into the fray.[1]

From what knowledge the public had to draw on in 1914 it seemed feasible that Britain had been caught in a vicious cycle of events, that the war had really very little to do with individuals or ideals after the Austrians found Serbia in an embarrassing position. As Esmé Wingfield-Stratford so ably phrased it:

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1. The Daily Graphic had this observation to make in an editorial on July 29: "Even if Austrian action were less justified than it is the idea of plunging the whole of Europe into war on that account would be an act of madness. But it is universally recognized that the grievances of Austria are well founded, and that if she is to enjoy a normal repose in the future she must give Serbia a sharp lesson now. Even in Russia this is not denied."

Arnold Bennett recorded in his journal on August 6th similar sentiments: "I agree that Russia is the real enemy, and not Germany; and that a rapprochement between England and Germany is a certainty. But I doubt whether it is wise, in the actual conduct of affirs, to try to see so far ahead. I think that the belligerency of England is a mistake--for England. Yet if I had had to choose, I believe my instinct would have forced me to make war." An almost fatalistic note in his answer is added later: "The war is a mistake on our part, but other things leading to it were a mistake, and, these things approved or condoned, the war must be admitted inevitable." Journals of Arnold Bennett, Volume II, (1932), p. 94.

> The rules of the skin game were inexorable. It would be unthinkable for Russia, once humiliated, to stand by and see her protege /Serbia/ crushed. It would be unthinkable for Germany to let Russia mobilize without instantly mobilizing herself; to mobilize against Russia meant attacking France; to attack France meant to march, burning and destroying, through the cities of neutralized Belgium--for Moltke knew no other way of getting his machine to work. All this with the logic of a mathematical proposition, as the result of a pistol-shot and the spirit of 20th century Europe!
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> And England? For her, no more than the rest was there any loophole of escape . . . Well might George V, on the launching of a British ultimatum to Germany, throw up his hands in despair and cry to the American ambassador, "My God, Mr. Page, what else could we do?"[1]

Today one might easily suggest that some sort of apology became a subconscious necessity for the country, and that one was accordingly manufactured. However, one must not underestimate the fervour created by the rapid series of events in August and September. Their emotional appeal--it is impossible to call it anything else--removed any overt doubts that may have arisen in the majority of minds. The reasoned case for war came afterwards, perhaps in answer to the onslaught of pacifists like Shaw. It was expounded via analyses of German ambitions and vivid descriptions of atrocities (actual and imagined) committed in the name of her militarism, Thus,

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1. Esme' Wingfield-Stratford, op. cit., pp. 371-72.

Thou careless awake!
Thou peacemaker fight!
Stand England, for honour,
And God guard the right![1]

seemed reasonable enough in the heat of that first August. Yet motivations discovered after-the-fact and advertised before the public suggest that there was an undercurrent--however slight--of hesitation which brought such works as the two essays of Bennett and Wells to the surface to demonstrate voluble proof of sanity in the very mien of chaos. Here one finds the first seeds of a neurosis that was to shake the intellectual foundations of a great many Englishmen during the latter stages of the war, and to become the predominant theme of a great many serious works on the war written after the conflict.

The early war novels belonged to the same genre as Bennett's essay on liberty in that they were little more than imaginative vindications of British honour and manhood. Popular novelists such as Joseph Hocking and Florence L. Barclay were before the public by December with such fiction. Hocking's All for a Scrap of Paper was only another link in a chain of popular novels by that author, but he was up to date with a story about the outbreak of war and recruiting in Cornwall. The hero is a pacifist in

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1. Robert Bridges, "Thou Careless Awake," Times Literary Supplement, August 13, 1914.

principle but he yields to the conviction that it is a holy war and enlists. His glory is an interview, while a prisoner of war, with the Kaiser himself.

Florence Barclay's long short story in a single volume, My Heart's Right There, complete with Union-Jack cover and an inscription "To our men at the front," carries on the newly discovered tradition of the home front. Three years of blissful, lower-class peace drift by for the heroine and her "soldier man," and "Then--just before Tiny's third birthday--the senseless demoniacal ambition of one man, decreed that peace and prosperity should be things of the past, in tens of thousands of happy homes." Neither book can be called much more than a sentimental appendix to the recruitment posters, "The King and Your Country Want You." Yet both were well received, My Heart's Right There accounting for three editions in a little over a month.

No doubt their primary literary intention was to bolster recruitment. Thus a relatively new phenomenon was introduced into fiction, one that, as the war lengthened, was to produce a sizable amount of work and have a visible effect on more responsible works as well. Circumstances seemed to demand such writing, and by the same token any realistic examination of those first months of war was exceedingly difficult until the country could afford to view the war more calmly.

Up to the end of 1914 the amount of fiction in the mass of published material concerning the war was almost negligible (nine volumes for adult reading), but in the first three months of 1915, 22 new novels and collections of stories appeared on the subject. By then the first phase of the war could be seen in some perspective, for the wave of enthusiasm that swept the country after the Marne victory and the belief that it would be a short, victorious war had given way to second thoughts. The puzzling Russian campaign was one cause of this, as were the severe casualties at Ypres in early November--50,000 lost in a regular army of 160,000 men. The true significance of "a war of exhaustion" was striking home.

Passionate determination may be said to have taken the place of the almost light-hearted enthusiasm that was characteristic of the early slogan (later quietly dropped from daily financial columns), "Business as Usual." Juvenile adventure stories and sentimental diatribes written from imagination rather than experience exemplified the light-hearted attitude in fiction. But even through the heavy curtain of Florence Barclay's sentiment one senses the grim necessity of seeing it through, and this was a step from the first weeks of the conflict. Yet if the first phase had seemed ephemeral, this was even more so, for the monotony of the Western Front and the continuous appeals for

support to the civilian populace were to provide a tranquilizing effect in England that led to an escape from boredom into a sort of hedonism, into a dream world in which zeppelin raids on London were of more importance than a major battle in France, no matter how absurd a comparison of losses was.[1] A brief examination of the war's progress in its early months does much to explain these "psychological" developments which had their counterparts in popular fiction.

Between the fifth and twelfth of August the Germans had mobilized their troops on the Western Front in accordance with the German war plan that necessitated passage through Belgium. The movement began on the later date after an advance force had been sent to clear a path along the river Meuse for this large concentration of one million five hundred thousand men. The advance force was held up at Liége by Belgian forts which commanded the main arteries in the German path. However, the force broke through and captured Brussels on the 20th. On the same day Namur was besieged, the last barrier between the German right wing and France.

In the meantime, a French offensive had opened in the southeast, and their army was prevented from falling into the planned German

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1. Arnold Bennett has captured the mood very well in The Pretty Lady.

envelopment from Belgium only by being defeated on the 20th of August in Lorraine. Crown Prince Rupprecht's victory had forced the French to withdraw to a fortified line from which they were able to detach troops as reinforcements for the left flank (Belgium) where the Germans were now advancing according to their schedule.[1] The German plan had been to withdraw on the southern front in the face of any French attack and so lure them into a partial encirclement, but the Crown Prince's rash victory defeated the strategy. Instead, the advance was held up somewhat in the northwest. The Battle of Mons (August 23-24) saw the first action of the British Expeditionary Force, but even with their support, the Allied left wing was not strong enough to hold the flank and fell back to the Marne. Here the decisive battle of the war was fought and won by the Allies, just as the public at home was led to believe. Yet, though it prevented a quick victory and subsequent peace on German terms, it did not hamper the development of a long war of attrition of the type that was already being waged on the French right wing and was accounting for serious losses on both sides with little or no gain.

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1. The victory was never reported as such in the British press, and this attitude remained characteristic of official dispatches for the rest of the war.

The Battle of the Marne hinged upon a number of coincidences. It was a battle, when compared with the major offensives on the Western Front, only in a negative sense, for the Germans when they were engaged retreated and were able to save most of the troops that had been jeopardized by the French flanking movement. Their army at the beginning of the battle (fifth of September) was overextended and exhausted from the quick campaign. Then, the German wheeling movement away from Paris was begun too soon and left them open to a flank attack by the French divisions defending the capital. When it came, the seemingly nonexistent British troops moved up from the south where they had retreated out of the German staff's sight and entered the gap that had been created by the German preoccupation with the French attack from the west. On the ninth the German higher command decided on a general retreat which destroyed their hopes of a quick victory but enabled them to solidify on a line along the Aisne.

Both sides then began the famous "rush to the sea" that extended the Western Front from Switzerland to the coast and prepared the way for the trench warfare which was to characterize the conflict until 1918--at a terrible price for both sides. By the end of October the B. E. F. had been concentrated between La Bassée and Ypres in Flanders. Here they waged what was to be

the last engagement of the professional British Regular Army. In spite of enormous casualties the line was maintained until winter weather prevented further German attempts for a break-through. By May of the next year the Territorial Forces and Kitchener's "New Army" were thoroughly intermixed with the few remaining regulars and thus brought Britain's army into the conflict on a continental scale.

On the Russian front, the steamroller that was to crush Prussia was slow in starting, and when it did get under way the movement was disastrous. The German eastern army, under the most brilliant combination of leaders the war was to produce, von Hindenberg and Ludendorff, fought and won the Battle of Tannenberg, which cost the Russians no less than a quarter of a million men. Immediately afterwards the other wing of the Russian pincers in East Prussia was pushed back into Poland. In the south, the Russians had managed to heavily defeat the Austrians at Lemberg. But early in November Ludendorff turned on the Russians in this sector and succeeded in forcing them back in front of Warsaw, where both sides went into winter trenches. Thus, both in the east and the west a trench-bound stalemate had been produced by the end of the year.

The war on the seas was a more one-sided affair, with Britain's vastly superior fleet holding the Germans in the Baltic ports. While Allied trade was only negligibly hampered by the Kaiser's

few loose ships and submarines, Germany and Austria were effectively cut off from international commerce, with the result that their defeat became almost inevitable.

On December 16, a reminder of the war appeared that was close enough to be felt in some measure by the home front. Three German cruisers made a demonstration against the Yorkshire coast, bombarding Scarborough, Whitby, and Hartlepool. The action foreshadowed the dawn of another form of war which, in one historian's words, "helped to drive home the reality that the war of armies had become the war of peoples."[1] In January Zeppelin raids began on the English coast and were followed with attacks on London itself. The original excuse for indiscriminate bombing of civilian and military sites was that they were difficult to distinguish from the air. However, this argument was to give way to the frank avowal that in a war for existence the will of the enemy nation, not merely the bodies of its soldiers, is the inevitable target.

But the first Christmas of the Great War had not suffered this discovery and there was a momentary "tolerance" on both sides of the Western Front, a "tolerance" which seemed to grow out of the discomfort that troops, no matter what their nationality, shared in common. It was symbolized by the cease fire and fraternization

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1. Captain Liddell Hart, The Real War, 1914-1918, (1930), p. 96.

which took place on Christmas Day, and developed among the combatants into a mutual respect for each other, thus becoming a predominant theme for the anti-war literature that was to appear in the last year of the conflict.[1] The gap between civilian and soldier was naturally beginning to widen, and so it continued until the civilian populace seemed only intermittently aware of France in their own concern with Zeppelin raids and the "London Season." The men who had gone on leave and afterwards left a record of their experiences did not too often follow Miss Barclay's hero in going back to a few days of bliss in Blighty before God and Country demanded them at the front again. They found London an alien world whose gaiety and self-concern had no place for the trench soldier save as a participant in its own wild abandon; and more often than not they returned to France a little relieved at being back where they understood the life around them and were accepted by it. There was a tradition of abuse for Tommy Atkins by a civilian population, but this was learned by the new civilian army only in the later stages of 1915 when the war seemed to have lasted beyond all possibility.

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1. Henri Barbusse in his novel Le Feu uses just such a fraternization as a poetic testament of the horrors of war. It is one of the most moving pieces of fiction on the trenches that has appeared.

Kitchener's New Army, or "The First Hundred Thousand" as the first volunteers came to be known, arrived on the Western Front after five months of arduous training, in the spring of 1915. It was somewhat more like a regular army unit than anything that was to follow, as officers and men were trained together, went to the front in the same drafts, and were deployed in their original units--until the remnants were so few as to be of more use as replacements than as regiments. Like the regular army and the territorials they possessed the advantage of a sort of individuality which does not really belong to the mass armies of the Twentieth Century. At the same time, Kitchener's army was made up by and large of civilians, and it was inevitable that there would be writers among its number that wouldn't be found in a professional force.[1]

John Hay Beith was such a figure. In early January the first installment of The Diary of a Subaltern appeared in Blackwoods Magazine. It was an unofficial history of "K (1)" (The First

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1. "Sapper," or Herman Cyril Macneile was an exception to the rule. Born of a military family, Macneile took a commission in the Royal Engineers in 1907, and in August, 1914, was a Captain. The war, in his case, seems to have introduced him to writing, and after his demobilization as a Lieutenant Colonel in 1919 he became a professional writer. Charles Morgan, a much better writer, had been a professional navy man before the war, but had resigned his commission in 1913, and was called back into service.

Hundred Thousand), published in book form under the pseudonym, Ian Hay, in December, 1915. Written day-by-day on scraps of paper for month-by-month publication, this series of episodes was the first novel of the war which has a claim to some repute, however small, as literature. Unlike those of its many predecessors in print as war books, the episodes in the narrative are not loosely strung together on the cord of war-time adventure; nor is the narrative a fanciful flight of the soldier from being a Glasgow tradesunionman to seasoned veteran and Victoria Cross holder. Beith, by following his own unit through the toils of training without the proper equipment and with only the barest minimum of professional supervision into the actual war on the Western Front, was able to suggest the life (and death) of a pioneer effort in a new military epoch. The real hero is "K (1)." To make The First Hundred Thousand come alive he plays a wonderfully humorous variety of characters against the new experience that the army is for civilians. Inevitably, slapstick is employed, as is sentiment (and haven't they been a part of war from time immemorial?), but the dosage is small enough to add verve to the narrative without ruining its literary effects. Only one or two characters approximate any sort of rounded existence; yet this goes hand-in-hand with its intention, for "K (1)" does become very real.

The finest achievement of this "popular" novel, however, is the very honest picture it gives throughout of the war. One almost feels that Beith is an unbiased observer in the events, recording them as if they were history in order to get at the truth. When he writes of the ardour of the young subalterns and their hopes of glory against the Hun, it is sincere feeling expressed simply and somehow does not sound like the patriotic panegyric that existed in almost every piece of war fiction that was being published at that time. It foreshadowed comments on the same feelings by Edmund Blunden, Robert Graves, and Siegfried Sassoon, who wrote from the other end of the war with a ten years' perspective to aid their evaluation.

The last chapters on the Battle of Loos, that graveyard of dreams and men, are so well told that the action can be traced as a report of the actual events of a section of the battle. The feeling that was prevalent among the troops was one of confidence that the blow they were part of would end the trench stalemate to the glory of Britain and themselves. Beith's day-by-day fictionalized accounts capture it; indeed, they had led up to it from the first episode describing civilians learning to drill. Talk of the "Big Push" dominates the subalterns' dugouts, and the optimism of the new troops ready to throw themselves into the enemy's wire is everywhere in evidence. It was what they had enlisted for. The battle itself offered the ironic anticipations

in Beith's plot, for the new army's eagerness to see action ended in reality, as in the novel, with their annihilation. The same Scotsmen who are the representative battalion of "K (1)" described by Beith, did break through to the right of Loos, but a poorly co-ordinated covering movement on their left opened their flank and forced what was left of them into a withdrawal from the gap they had forged. Thus its first "Big Push" and the unit known as "K (1)" ended, ironically, in and around the slag heaps of Loos, the "Bings" which were so much like their counterparts in Lanarkshire where the Seventh (service) Battalion of the Bruce and Wallace Highlanders were recruited.

War fiction was flooding the new book lists by the middle of 1915, and most of it was no better than "popular" fiction has ever been, but a few, in an excess of patriotic feeling, were very much worse than anything publishers had ever loosed on the public. "Penny dreadfuls" were mild in comparison. Book notices had to dismiss daily prototypes of this trash, and perhaps the best description that can be made of them is to cite an analysis from "New Books and Reprints" in the Times Literary Supplement of February 4, 1915. The following paragraph notice was given to Love Letters to a Soldier:

> "Do you like chocolate and such like brown products my beloved? Say you do . . . Oh, my beloved, have you really gone from me--gone to fight, perhaps to die? . . . Wounded are you, my soldier man? Well, come home to me, and let me nurse you well and--send you back again." And so on.

And this represented no exaggerated selection, either.

Novels and stories directly concerned with the fighting were generally on a somewhat higher level, although they had their moments as well. Private Spud Tamson by Captain R. W. Campbell is fairly representative of these. Again the narrative is of Scots training and going to war, in this case as members of the Special Reserve, "The Glesca Mileeshy," which "is no regiment in particular." The story is simply a composite study of the types who made up the militia regiments, then known as the Special Reserve. Spud rises from his position as heir of a Glasgow balloon and candy merchant to full sergeant and in the course of the action captures German spies, indulges in the usual barrack room horseplay, and eventually leads a furious assault against the Huns. After the horrible battle on which the novel closes,

> Spud Tamson was found living, yet seriously wounded. He had been bayoneted in the chest while gallantly rescuing his colonel from a band of lusty Bavarians.
>
> "Save him if you can, for he has earned the V. C.," said the adjutant to the doctor as Spud was lifted into the motor ambulance.

> "Oh, he'll live all right," was the cheerful reply as the motor started on its way. And live he did. The whole Empire cried "Well done," and all the world wondered at this hero from the slums.[1]

As juvenile fiction such passages are not unreasonable. However, Captain Campbell intersperses his narrative with lectures on German spies, German naval plans, and so on, which are obviously there for the "good" they will do--or the harm. The main voice for these sentiments is one Captain Greens, who had discovered before the war began that "every German waiter, schoolmaster, and tradesman in all the towns from Peterhead to Dundee" was a spy for the Fatherland. For a public already incensed against often innocent merchants of German origin, this was only adding more fuel to the flames of overwrought irrationality.

More significant was the first book by "Sapper" (Herman Cyril Macneile), Sergeant Michael Cassidy. Macneile, a professional soldier until 1919, cannot be considered a writer of any merit but he spoke, one feels, for a great many soldiers and ex-soldiers during and after the war. No matter how distasteful the racial discrimination and violence of the Bull Dog Drummond stories are to our age of exaggerated humanitarianism, they honestly represented

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1. Captain R. W. Campbell, Private Spud Tamson, (1915), p. 291.

in the twenties an attitude as prevalent as that of the pacifists. The popularity of such work displays that. And in this first very poorly connected series of stories there is, as it were, the prelude to his eulogies of comradeship, which was the one thing that justified war in his mind.[1]

War fiction, though copious, had reached no high level by the end of 1915. Beith's success--which was the exception that proved the rule--seemed to be due more to faithful reporting than to artistic intention. As for the rest, suffice it to say they still depended in their works on the fascination their subject held for the reading public, rather than upon any quality other than straight reporting.

And the war dragged on. It had come to a standstill in France, but each side continued to attempt a break-through and to expend more and more lives. During February and March, 1915, the French lost 50,000 men in Champagne and gained only a depth of 500 yards. In the next month they lost 64,000 in the St. Mihiel salient. The first British offensive occurred at Neuve Chapelle on March 10th of the same year. A break-through was achieved but was not followed up soon enough, and when the staff did order the attack forward "at all costs,"

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1. Eric remarque was to develop the same theme much more effectively in 1928, but not in the same key, for his was an anti-war novel, whereas Macneile's were not.

losses were the only result. Here, also, the munitions shortage was acutely felt by the British, and public opinion evoked by this led to a reorganization of munitions manufacturing. Britain was settling down to war in earnest on a truly continental scale.

Gas was introduced by the Germans in April at Ypres, and though they did not exploit the gap in the British line which this novel weapon produced, the second battle of Ypres was the one instance in which the defenders (French and British) suffered far more casualties than the attackers. British losses alone were 59,000.

Three days after the main German attack at Ypres another front was opened by the Allies in an attempt to "go round" the trench barrier in the west. This new strategy was crystallized into an attack upon the Dardanelles to loosen Russia of her dangerous isolation from the other Entente nations. Turkey had joined the Central Powers in late October, 1914, and since then had pinned down large Russian and British forces with operations in the Middle East. On the 25th of April the combined British, Dominion, and French forces landed on Gallipoli to begin eight months of futile attacks against an enemy of far inferior numbers. From first to last the campaign from the Entente point of view was a series of tactical errors combined

with unusually bad luck. Water and food supplies failed, troops were landed on the wrong beaches, artillery was unavailable for support, and dysentery plagued the troops, all on a front which had no rest area out of the enemy's gun-fire. By the end of the campaign the British had a casualty list of 213,980, not counting naval losses--and nothing else to show for it.

In the meantime the Liberal Prime Minister, Asquith, had formed a coalition government and established a National Ministry of War, both symptomatic of a readjustment of popular outlook. War required the dogged determination of its nations at home as well as on the field, and 1915 marked Britain's settling down to business, not "as usual," but in the grim realization that there was little room for the "usual" of pre-war 1914.

On the Eastern Front Russia faced the full brunt of a German offensive, and she subsequently lost Poland along with a sizable chunk of her army. She had, however, kept the Central Powers busy, and remained at the end of the year "a potential military danger which compelled Germany to retain in the East troops she badly needed for attacks in the West."[1]

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1. John Brophy, The Five Years: 1914-18, (1936), p. 47.

On May 24th Italy had declared war on Austria, but had avoided an open breach with Germany. From the early summer of 1915 until December she attacked the mountainous and almost impregnable Austrian border. In gaining practically no ground and losing 280,000 men her effort had results that paralleled those of the other Allied attacks in 1915. The much maligned Austrian troops had shown more character against the Italians than they had in the east, and in the same year they succeeded in conquering Serbia in spite of an Entente landing at Salonika to aid her.

In early September the British rest areas in back of the Western Front began to seethe with rumours of a "big push," rumours born of confidence, for it was the first time the New Armies and Territorials were to take a prominent role. Few of these men seemed to doubt the war-ending ability of joint hammer blows by the British and French on the Western Front. The Battle of Loos, as their part of the third Battle of Artois was called, began on the 25th of September. Captain Liddell Hart more aptly termed it "the unwanted battle" in his The Real War: 1914-18, for the British General Staff was forced into taking the offensive in support of the larger French efforts in Champagne and at Artois. But the new troops did not know of the wholly unfavorable conditions and were instilled with the enthusiasm that had brought them into

the vanguard of Kitchener's army. Beith, among others, has recorded their battle. It only remains to be said that their rewards were those of honour without victory and a casualty list of 60,392. The French paid even more dearly for their acres of ground gained, losing 191,797 officers and men on the two sections of front.

All in all, 1915 had been a dark year for the Entente. Its consequences in literature, however, depended more on the effects of the fighting on the course of future events (conscription was one result) than in the experiences of individual writers. Yet they had not been left on the wayside of the conflict.

Anatole France, perhaps, signalized the attitude of the majority of creative men in these early years of war. Late in 1914, at the age of 70, the venerable member of the French Academy enlisted as a private. And he was not alone among artists. Charles Peguy and Henri Barbusse had also, among others, been quick to go to the aid of their country.

In Great Britain, as has been seen, Wells and Bennett immediately turned to journalism in support of their country. But two writers of their age enlisted early in the war. H. H. Munro, or "Saki" as his devotees knew him, refused a commission and went to France as a corporal with the 22nd Royal Fusiliers. He was killed by a sniper bullet at Beaumont-Hamel in November, 1916. C. E. Montague dyed his hair and enlisted as had Munro, but his health broke under

the strain of the Western Front and he was sent home to serve the main part of the war as an officer in Intelligence.

E. M. Forster and Somerset Maugham were both employed with the Foreign Service early in the war, Forster going to Egypt for three years, and Maugham to Italy where he became a secret agent of sorts.

Hugh Walpole drifted to the Eastern Front and spent the first years of the conflict with the Red Cross in Russia, receiving a decoration for courage during his active service.

Only Charles Morgan, among the talented writers caught up in the war, was a professional military man. As has been mentioned, however, he had resigned his commission in 1913 and had to be recalled to active service. During the struggle for Antwerp in 1915 he was forced into Holland with his command of marines and spent the remainder of the war interned there. His novel, The Fountain, was derived from this experience.

These represent a few among many who were swept up into Armageddon on the first tidal wave of optimism. They were followed by others of the younger generation who continued to enlist almost up to the Armistice. But volunteering was largely a private matter, and it consequently went without any undue notice after the first months of 1914. With the inevitable arrival of conscription in January, 1916, a more spectacular

reaction to the war identified itself with a few groups at home, and these men were much more noticeable than their brethren in the military machine. They foreshadowed, in fact, a post-war attitude that was to become almost a cliché. For the first mood of hope and glory had died at Loos, and the second, of gestation, was about to begin.

III

THE WAR YEARS: SECOND PHASE

> everything unnatural, broken, blasted; the distortion of the dead whose unburiable bodies sit outside the dug-outs all day, all night, the most execrable sights on earth. In poetry we call them the most glorious. But to sit with them all day, all night--and a week later to come back and find them still sitting there in motionless groups, that is what saps the soldierly spirit.
>
> Wilfred Owen in a letter, February, 1917

Even today one must notice above everything else in the history of the battles of Loos and the Somme and Paschendale, the pervading futility, the senseless loss which accompanied them. In the period between 1915 and 1917 a few soldier-poets on active service not only developed an attitude of despair and disillusion, they began to voice contempt for their leadership and for war itself. Much has been made of their cry. This disenchantment, in fact, was to become a clarion call for a younger generation, a literary convention as blatent as that of the fin de siecle mood of the nineties. Yet, when Owen and Sassoon and Blunden were writing their poetry, such sentiments were honest and reasonably original. And to read of the Western Front, or to follow the Dardanelles campaign through to its dismal end makes their cry comprehensible. As poets they were among the first to express their contempt for the "all that" of the Western Front, but they were neither alone in their protests nor isolated from each other. The most widely acclaimed of these war-time poets, Wilfred Owen, Siegfried Sassoon, Robert

Graves, and Edmund Blunden, were a loose-knit group of friends during the war and shared a similar approach to the four years. Wilfred Owen did not survive to gather his impressions into a volume, but his poems were collected by Sassoon and published posthumously. Each of the others produced not only verse which was published during the war, but was later to return to his experiences in autobiographical studies (of which more will be said later). Sassoon carried his convictions a step further during the 1914-18 period by linking himself with a pacifist movement among civilians, which nearly led to a court-martial and prison sentence. But their voices were as yet little heard in 1916, for that year marked the beginning of a period of gestation on the part of a public which was beginning to realize the significance of the Great War. As the struggle continued, its social effects were to become more clear at home.

Doubts about the conflict were no uncommon thing by the end of 1915. The already voluminous examinations and discoveries of justifications would continue to appear almost until Armistice Day. H. G. Wells was the first of the Edwardian novelists of any stature to examine the problem seriously in fiction with Mr. Britling Sees It Through, the most successful of his war novels. But such rational attempts at defining a proper attitude

to the tragedy of war by no means meant that extremes were being avoided by the public at large. Among the civilian populace, active pacifists and militants were much more vocal than those rationalists-cum-realists who accepted things as they were.

The political Left, in the early days of August, 1914, had taken the stand that the war belonged solely to a few politicians.[1] The cause of the war, they argued, rested with the ruling classes of Europe, not with the workers; but only the workers could stop the fighting by recognizing exclusively the "flag of international solidarity." There were, of course--as there perpetually seemed to be in the Left--confusing schisms that saw a pro-war wing developing from the beginning. Those, however, who remained faithful to their cause began to suffer from boycott, animosity, and sometimes physical assault. Later, even such established intellectuals as Bertrand Russell were to serve prison sentences for their convictions.

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1. Ramsay MacDonald had written in the Labour Leader of August 6: "It is a diplomatists' war, made by half-a-dozen men . . . a dozen men brought Europe to the brink of the Precipice and Europe fell over it. . . . And when we sit down and ask ourselves with fullness of knowledge: 'Why has this evil happened'? the only answer we can give is, because Sir Edward Grey has guided our foreign policy during the past eight years. His short-sightedness and his blunders have brought all this upon us." Quoted in Fenner Brockway, Inside the Left, (1942), p. 45.

In November, 1914, the editor of Labour Leader, Fenner Brockway, had begun a "No-Conscription Fellowship." A year later the organization was large enough to hold its first national meeting--inconveniently in the middle of Lord Derby's recruitment campaign. By then, too, feminine interest in the war had risen to its height, and one of the new occupations that the war had opened to the gentler sex was that of handing white feathers to every civilian on the street who had not "attested" to Lord Derby's appeal. And the inevitable furor? It seemed to be good publicity for both sides of the issue, and if Lord Derby's plan did not get enough support to make conscription unnecessary, the conscientious objectors at least were informed of the "No-Conscription Fellowship's" existence.

It is interesting to note that the movement in its infancy and up to the closing months of the war got little or no active support from the novelists and poets of the period. Bernard Shaw, whose breath was seldom not to be noticed blowing both hot and cold on every socialist espousal, had his bit to say in favour of Brockway and the others who led the fellowship; but he offered no unqualified support of their stand, and pointed out the likelihood of its offering a refuge to more than conscientious objectors. In literary circles only Bloomsbury could be positively identified with the overt pacifist rejection of conscription. Of the group's two novelists, however, one was

a woman and so not intimately concerned with the problem and the other, E. M. Forster, had taken a post with the government in Egypt that occupied him in war work for the duration, so he could not be identified with the Bloomsbury stand.

By January, 1916, almost all of the younger writers and writers-to-be were taken up or caught up in the war. Yet, though one might imagine otherwise, this absorption into active service on a full-time basis had no general effect on the productivity of writers who had been published before the war; rather, it seemed to inhibit the pens of some, and to have no effect at all on the prolificacy of others.[1] The older generation of Bennett, Wells, Conrad, Kipling, and Galsworthy were contributing a multitude of essays and articles in support of their country. Bennett and Wells were able as well to produce fiction during the four years, though it seemed a difficult task for both.

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1. E. M. Forster's last book before the war was published in 1911 (The Celestial Omnibus) and was not to be followed until 1922 (Alexandria: A History and a Guide). His last novel appeared in 1924 (A Passage to India). In his case there can be no certainty as to the cause of this lapse before, during, and after the war. Ford Madox Ford, however, gave up writing at the beginning of his war experience and was not to return to it, save in poetry, until 1922. C. E. Montague, also produced no fiction during the war years. Yet such men as Hugh Walpole and Compton Mackenzie were hardly affected by their new duties and continued to produce throughout the war years. See authors' biographies in the Appendix.

But it is the young who are of special interest here, for no matter how the Left distorted it, the popular phrase of 1914 that "It was a young man's war" remained very germain. They did the fighting, the suffering, that coloured their generation's views of the post-war world. And what of that peculiar quartet--Hugh Walpole, Gilbert Cannan, Compton Mackenzie, and D. H. Lawrence--that Henry James had cited in early 1914 as the most promising of the new literary generation?[1]

Hugh Walpole, because of myopia, had been rejected for active service, and instead had gone off to Russia. Once there, the young novelist had joined a Red Cross unit and had seen active duty as a stretcher bearer. This was no attractive job; rather, it was one in which the full brutality of the war was not only forced upon one, but was experienced vicariously as well through the multitudinous severed limbs and fatal wounds that gravitate to the hospital tent in any battle. The result in fiction was perhaps his finest work, The Dark Forest, and the first account of real war in a novel by a recognized novelist.

Compton Mackenzie, if possible, was even more anxious to become involved in the war. His spirit of adventure, of romance,

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1. Henry James, "The New Novel, 1914," Notes on Novelists, (1914).

was satisfied on the staff of Ian Hamilton in the Dardanelles. From thence he had gone to Greece and become an almost legendary director of intelligence in that country.

Gilbert Cannan, the third of James's quartet, has in his history those tantalizing qualities which, siren-like, lead one to premature conjectures and overly-easy generalizations about social phenomena--qualities which can be sensed in a whole generation, yet never be absolutely defined nor recognized as absolute truth. For here is a man whose literary development was stunted and finally destroyed during the war years; yet the blame cannot be as easily placed on the war as it might seem. In the beginning of his career, as Henry James noted, Cannan showed great promise and could be admired "for the wonder, the intensity, the probity of the vision" in the works he had already published. He had come upon the scene in 1909, with the express intent (one that was to become almost too common) of capturing in his work, not so much an individual life as the spirit of the age, the zeitgeist in which he lived. In his novels, especially in Round the Corner (that being where life really "was"), the result had been sketches in which, just under the surface, there was a stern insistence that "things are like this, no matter what you make of them; this is the way they are." His two novels on the war convey, somewhat unfortunately,

this same impression. In Pugs and Peacocks and in Sembal Cannan offered a very astute examination of the pacifist movement during the war years. Yet, Cannan's biting satire which was so obviously taken from life--the leading character of Pugs and Peacocks is a reasonable facsimile of Bertrand Russell--loses its significance in the later stages of both novels. For the patriarchal central figure that emerges from Cannan's prose assumes the proportions of a prophet preaching contempt and disgust.

There are three facets of his life during its brief productive period which make him seem a sort of prototype, a reflection of the mood of some of his generation. The first of these involved the intricacies of his marital relations; for, like Wells, Ford, Galsworthy, and Lawrence, Cannan was caught up just before the war in a sexual relationship that became a public scandal of sorts. After leaving Cambridge he had taken a post as secretary to James Barrie, the playwright. In 1909 Mrs. Barrie left her husband (much to his chagrin, it seems, for when Barrie died 28 years later he left an annuity of six hundred pounds to "his dearest Mary Cannan"). They were soon after divorced and she subsequently married Cannan. Secondly, Cannan was an extremely moody individual in this pre-war period. During the conflict his mental stability almost

completely deserted him, and he fell victim to paranoid schizophrenia. Finally, he was a conscientious objector. Cannan, like many others, avoided imprisonment by doing farm labor, but it is quite probable that the tensions created by his stand had a great deal to do with his eventual complete breakdown after the war. His novels published in the period between 1916 and 1924 are full of contempt and hatred for the world, one which he was leaving farther and farther behind, until his work had to be abandoned completely. Before this happened, however, Cannan was able to express his attitude toward the conflict in a way which suggests that he was one of the forerunners of the disillusioned school of war writers. In 1919 he described his feelings about the war in a long essay, The Anatomy of Society:

> As it has been the grim privilege of those who have eyes to see to behold human life flayed by the tragedy of the European War of 1914-18, it is no less than their duty to set down what they have seen for those who shall come after them, that they may provide for their tragedies not to be as futile and sterile as this has been.[1]

Just how much this sentiment was to be echoed by the war generation during the post-war years will be shown in a later chapter.

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1. Gilbert Cannan, The Anatomy of Society, (1919), p. 3.

There remains but D. H. Lawrence of this odd quartet of James's, and for him the war brought such a morass of misery as only an outrageously masochistic hyper-ego could have conceived. Yet, he was not a conscientious objector--far from it. And in principle he was not opposed to war; until it personally touched him, he could condemn it in one breath, praise it in another.[1] In 1914, a severe winter brought with it depressions of ill health and seemed to force Lawrence's political beliefs into a similar trough. His temperament was well suited to such uncertainty and fundamental frivolity toward the external world, and combined with financial worries which were in part due to the new demand for war literature that left him out of favour, this depression developed into a genuine fear. In March, 1915, he wrote:

> So they are making a coalition government. I cannot tell you how icy cold my heart is with fear. It is as if we were all going to die. Did I not tell you the revolution would come? . . . Why does one feel so coldly afraid? Why does even the coalition of the government fill me with terror? Some say it is for peace negotiations. It may be, because we are all afraid. But it is most probably for conscription. The touch of death is very cold and horrible upon us all.[2]

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1. See Richard Aldington, Portrait of a Genius, But . . . , (1950), pp. 155-158.

2. Ibid., p. 162.

Richard Aldington attributes this concern to his instinctive horror of the industrial machine which was transferred to the military machine. Not horror at the thought of mutilation and death, but of being crushed into a mass pattern, of losing his individuality. In a sense, this creating of a human machine is integral to the success of an army and Lawrence's fear was justified. Where he erred was in believing, if Aldington is correct, that one forfeited completely one's individuality in the army. At any rate his very subjective view of this enigma began, toward the end of the first year of war, to drive him to extremes much more uncomfortable than those ordinarily the fate of a semi-invalid unfit for active service.

Political naïveté was one of Lawrence's characteristics, and the 1914-19 period saw him reinforcing a simple faith in the dream of a small Utopian society of select friends away from the crosscurrents of modern society--this in spite of failure after failure to share anything intimately with his few friends in England. He was also drawn for a moment into the ideological web of Bertrand Russell, and in February, 1915, the Cambridge Don and the Midlands Poet "made excited comments of a detailed plan for the immediate Social Reconstruction of the world."[1]

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1. Ibid., p. 165.

In almost the same breath Lawrence could contemplate running away, anywhere, to escape the madness of the world. Then he would want to go to war, until he saw soldiers on leave as they must inevitably be seen through the eyes of a sensitive civilian in war time--as a species of disreputable scum. Both Catherine Carswell and Richard Aldington, who knew him then and have written analytically about the period, seem to grope awkwardly for Lawrence's true position in regard to the war. That he grew to hate it they have no doubt, but there is in both a recognition of his inconsistency in the matter, even after he had reaped the bitterest fruit of its effects upon his life. Catherine Carswell has summarized his beliefs in this way:

> . . . he quickly divined the dire significance of this war, which we now appreciate after the event. He could see no true way of ameliorating the horror. He believed that attempts at amelioration (such as war-work), like attempts at defiance (such as conscientious objection), equally involved identification with the horror. Springing from "the nervous fire of opposition," these were secretly part of the evil and by opposing, fomented it. He could but say that he would have no part in it, not even a protesting part. Nothing could have been harder for him than the inaction thus imposed. While he accorded a qualified sympathy to the conscientious objector, his real sympathy was with the soldier. But the latter, he could not and the former, in the Quakerish sense, he would not be.[1]

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1. Catherine Carswell, The Savage Pilgrimage, (1951), p. 25.

In September, 1915, The Rainbow was published by Methuen. The tale of misfortune that was to follow the book through its trials has special interest in this study, for like all of Lawrence's personal difficulties during the war, the blame goes somewhat deeper than the war-time society in which the novel was buffeted around. Here was a novel that went through eight drafts before it was completed to the author's satisfaction, that began as part of a larger work, and that was rejected by Lawrence's publisher (Duckworth) twice before another house took it up. Upon publication it was fiercely attacked by a school of critics, and ten days later withdrawn from circulation. It was banned for obscenity two months later and was not to reappear until the end of the war. But all of this must be seen against the background of the times. First one must consider that Lawrence himself had found Wells' Ann Veronica distasteful, and that the row such "loose" literature raised in the few years before the war inevitably increased once morality was made static by war-time demands and behaviour given a strange new license. Soldiers could be expected to be lax in their behaviour when home on leave from the front. Witnessing this on the promenade in London--among all classes--only intensified the spoken concern of an older generation. Then, woman's new independence politically and economically was leading to other freedoms that were becoming

a problem for a parental generation. So it was only natural that a vocal resistance to further inroads in Victorian propriety should appear.[1] And forty years later one continues to hear similar protests and to recognize the existence of the same double standard of morality. Indeed it seems almost that society requires it to exist.

The Rainbow was not in the strictest sense an immoral book. And certainly it was most serious literature. Yet here was a novel in which the main characters defied propriety, in fact, replaced the old values with new personal ones that stemmed not from Victoriana's sacred cow, rationality, but from the emotions themselves. The descriptive passages of the book were even more suspect in the way that suggestive natural settings were used to heighten emotional experiences and underscore the action--a method Lawrence had perfected in The Rainbow--and in terms of Freudian interpretations especially were open to the criticism of being "erotic."

Can one be surprised then that the book was attacked by the same reviewers who had stood up against almost every serious novel that attempted to reflect modern society as it was? Of course not. And it is important to recognize all the factors at play in the banning for what they were, for here is

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1. This interplay of standard and reality is a major theme of the more important war novelists. Its importance will be fully delineated in the chapters on war novels.

a clue to one facet of the very character of the part the war played in the changing aspects of the novel. Although the scandal Frieda's divorce proceedings and the animosity Lawrence's personality had created among influential people may have had something to do with the ultimate fate of The Rainbow, it was banned as "obscene." Lawrence's occasional rash statements about the war did not enter into the trial or the reviews which had precipitated it.[1]

Obscenity is, even today, a very difficult term to define, but our conception of its meaning has, over forty years, changed a great deal as we have become "conditioned" to more sophisticated attitudes toward sex. In 1915, one would have expected a change upon similar lines from the social mores of 1857, yet it was

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1. George Moore took a different stand. He wrote in his introduction to Lawrence's Sex, Literature, and Censorship, (1953): "There seems to have been more than a possible violation of obscenity laws in the banning. May Sinclair--one of the few authors who stood up for The Rainbow at this time--used to say that the suppression was partly political. As Aldington remembers it, the prosecution seems to have gone so far as to suggest that the novel's implied criticisms of the Boer War had begun to hamper recruiting, which at that time lagged."

This may well be the case, but official accounts made no mention of such a charge. One H. Muskett, speaking for the Commissioner of Police at the trial, accused the book of being "a mass of obscenity of thought, idea and action throughout, wrapped up in a language which he supposed would be regarded in some quarters as an artistic and intellectual effort," The Times, November 5th, 1915, p. 3.

by virtue of a statute of that year that The Rainbow was condemned to be destroyed.

A paradoxical attitude toward sex was, as has been stated, a predominate characteristic of the Edwardian era. During the war years public behaviour and moral standards fell even farther apart, until the schism was sufficiently wide for a re-evaluation to be made--after the war. And the public reaction which The Rainbow caused is perfect evidence of this. Even among his literary friends there was little open support for Lawrence's plight--perhaps because even for them the novel was somewhat distasteful--and the book dropped from sight until it was rereleased after the war. Lawrence continued to write, yet he published very little. There was no market for him, even in the small magazines his friends published.

In Women in Love, which he wrote during the later years of the war, there is hardly a glance at the external turmoil of the world. Lawrence, with his almost mystic belief in the importance of capturing the small society as opposed to the great modern swirl of mankind, writes a tale set in the Edwardian period which only hints that the outside world exists at all. Personal relationships overshadow all else, and if one were to trace the genetic ancestry of the book to the experiences in the Lawrences' Cornwall cottage between them and

Katherine Mansfield and Middleton Murry, then the conclusion would have to be that for Lawrence, the war was important only in so far as it affected personal relationships, and in such static isolation it could be and was avoided, at least in prose.

In actuality the case was just the opposite, for the war did affect the poet, quite deeply. And he was to deal with it in a novel--like so many young, active-service war writers--once the experience was complete and behind him. Women in Love was still a work in progress when his military summons reached him. He was medically rejected because of ill health, but told he should volunteer for civilian service--a thing he would not do. At the same time, one of his few short stories written about the war turned on him with a vengeance. "England, My England" had appeared in The English Review in October, 1915, and like so much of his work, had revolved around a cruel satire of a former benefactor. In the story the protagonist (who served with the "machine guns" of an artillery regiment--an error that demonstrated Lawrence's naïveté about battle) was killed in action. Now he did die, just as the story had forecast, and his death struck Lawrence with remorse that the story had been written.

Things went from bad to worse. Because he could not escape the incrimination of his wife's nationality and his own morose attitude to the war by enlisting, as Ford Madox Ford had done to

elude the consequences of his pretentions to German aristocracy, he was hounded by the police for the remainder of the war. He and Frieda were expelled from the coast of Cornwall, deprived of means of livelihood, and prevented from leaving the morass of misery that Britain had become for them.

The war's effect on Lawrence? To say that the four years embittered him would be putting it mildly. Certainly it led to his permanent departure from the country. As Richard Aldington has phrased it:

> What had he to stay for? They said his writings were obscene; had suppressed them and insulted him. He was a sick man, a consumptive; and because he did not flatter the ruling clique they conscripted him and bullied him. They said he was a spy and expelled him from his home; and yet forbade him to leave their jurisdiction. His so-called best friend [Murry] had rejected his work for a feeble little literary paper. Why on earth should he stay with such people?[1]

Yet, to paraphrase one of his own popular expressions, Lawrence was Lawrence. And trouble for him was not bred out of his surroundings. It emanated from the man. It was a necessary concomitant of his art. The inwardness of his fiction, the concern with the full achievement of self through a few intimate friends, these might conceivably have been heightened by the imposition the war was for him, but they had existed

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1. Aldington, Portrait of a Genius, But . . ., p. 209.

in the man before. Still, these traits, which have come to be considered major characteristics of the modern novel, blossomed during the war years and were molded into Women in Love out of a war-imposed isolation. And his "war book" was to put further emphasis on such an interpretation of his development.

Each member of that peculiar quartet rising out of the mist of Jamesian prose in a pre-war Times Literary Supplement suffered the war in his own way. And for each it was a unique, a formative experience. With the exception of Cannan, whose loss of sanity makes him appear almost as a symbol of the war's cost, they were to return to it in prose. And here one may glimpse the significance of the world's convulsion in The Novel itself.

Seen at a glance the war seems to resemble a stepping stone between the societies-at-large of Bennett and Galsworthy and Wells, and those isolated conclaves of individuals who, Bloomsburylike, struggle to escape from their loneliness by shutting out society-at-large and groping for intimacies with a select few, looking for salvation not in the world but in themselves. Lawrence, in Women in Love and to a lesser degree in The Rainbow, had written of just such an isolated and subjective society that shut out the external world. At about the same time Virginia Woolf's first novel, The Voyage Out, had appeared, prophecying her involvement with the individual's isolation

in an indifferent world. And of course there was Joyce in the background, working out similar themes. But the war novel was adapted by its subject for either the traditional or the new in this matter. In February, 1916, The Dark Forest appeared, the first war fiction by an author of any importance who had experienced the front, and it could be identified with both approaches. Yet, it was written by a man who stood in direct antithesis to the action and behaviour of Lawrence.

Hugh Walpole found in Russia that same distorted reality that festered the trenches of the Western Front, and added to it were the complexities of an alien tongue and the enigma of Russian character. His first six weeks, he wrote to Henry James, were the "bloodiest" of his whole life:

> I got not a line from any living soul during the first month, although letters have come in plenty since. People were kind but it all seemed to be an inferno of rain, pasteboard, policemen and prostitutes. Moscow, in the rain, looked appalling, all the gilt domes tawdry, the hideous modern buildings like sham scenery at Earls Court. The streets swam in mud. I got no news of the war because I couldn't read, the food was all sweets and cabbage, and I was lonely beyond belief. I felt too that I was utterly useless. They wouldn't have me in England because I couldn't see, here in the streets they thought I was a German.[1]

His foremost idea was to learn Russian so as to be able to get to the front as a stretcher bearer. But he continued to

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1. Quoted in Rupert Hart-Davis, Hugh Walpole, (1952), p. 125.

write--"I go on at my novel /The Green Mirror/,"[1] he wrote to his mother, "I find it a kind of narcotic." Walpole's first view of the war had a great effect on him, and was to be reflected later in his novel--not the horror, but the sense of excitement which the experience conveyed to the near-sighted young man. Again, in a letter to James he has described the events and it is worth quoting here. On the whole, his reaction in these first days at the Eastern Front as a war correspondent was representative of the feeling he had about his total war experience.

> I have had a very wonderful time and got very near to Lodz--further than the correspondents and further than any other Englishman I believe. I was for part of the time within three miles of the Germans and just escaped being a prisoner which I should have hated. I had also one or two narrow squeaks, once especially when I was caught under two German aeroplanes and the whole Russian army began to fire on every side of me. I had a lot of ground to cover before I found a trench. That little accident and others were due to my eyesight which was my chief trouble. Whenever there was a mist I couldn't see either with my glasses or without them and blundered about in a most dangerous fashion. Nevertheless I saw a great deal--a wonderful lot.[2]

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1. Ibid., p. 123. In another letter to James this impression is strengthened by his comment: "My novel goes happily and is in no way embarrassed by all the turmoil--in fact, when I write it, I find myself more concentrated in it than I have ever been before." Quoted in Hart-Davis, p. 131.

2. Ibid., p. 128.

Writing was constantly on his mind, and on the same day he produced the above letter (December 23rd, 1914), he sent off a long gossipy note to Mrs. Belloc Lowndes in which he included an interesting appraisal of the war and the novel, and a rather enigmatic one, for The Dark Forest does not at all fit the requirements of his predicted future trends in the novel. He wrote:

> As to the future of the novel, I think that some may be killed by the war and some be created, but I'm certainly not pessimistic. I don't think people will have much sympathy with cynicism, Shavianism and the rest [remember the letter belongs to 1914 and its attendant hopes]. The great thing will be, I believe, a rather simple reality. But big work won't be affected. I don't believe any war would affect the life of, say, Typhoon, Clayhanger, or The Portrait of a Lady--and certainly not work bigger than those again . . .[1]

In March of the next year his ambition was fulfilled. He was given a commission in the Sanitar, or clearing-station part of the Red Cross. He was very pleased about this, and expressed satisfaction accordingly. The war had become something very positive for him, attractive in spite of the madness it reflected. Writing again to James:

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1. Ibid., p. 129.

> It is not that I don't realize all the tragedy and horror--I've already seen a considerable amount of it--but to be an actor (however tiny) in the greatest piece of history in the life of the world, to see such things, to be tested by the very deepest tests of all and to watch other people being tested, is to be so uplifted that one isn't a human being at all but something disembodied and quite abstract.[1]

Almost as soon as he had reached the front Walpole began a new novel that he called "Death and the Hunters," a work he had set in the very scenes through which he was now living. One can easily follow in his diary of the period, in fact, the very development of events which the physical action of the novel took--for "Death and the Hunters" was to become The Dark Forest.[2] Here, Walpole was using a journalistic approach with his imaginative talents, but where John Hay Beith relied on the war itself for his plot, the confrere of James and Bennett saw in it the ideal setting for a psychological study.

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1. Ibid., p. 129.

2. This was the major criticism Arnold Bennett had of the novel: "I thought the opening rather vague and lacking in direction--due no doubt to 'recency' (a new word) of impressions. However, the book gathers pace. By the time it finishes it is the best book of yours I have read since Mr. P. and Mr. T. . . . In my view you may make your mind easy about this book. You attempted an exceedingly dangerous feat--making fiction out of a mass of violent new impressions that could not possibly have settled down into any sort of right perspective in your mind . . . you have brought the affair very successfully off, with the help of an A. 1. central idea. . . ," quoted in Hart-Davis, op. cit., pp. 149-50.

What he did do was probably his best novel and the one most favored by himself. The scope of a war story is an interesting thing, one that forty years after the fact seems almost limitless. In those first years of war, however, it was a subject few people could deal with comfortably. In the heart of the Russian campaign Walpole found very little that resembled ordinary experiences. What he did see convinced him of the necessity of new values by which to weigh experience. But he did not accept those that arise out of a new system of order and personal discomfort, that give license to "scrounging," procrastination, and the avoidance of responsibility. Walpole's three months or so of active service were not enough to make the necessity of survival outweigh all other considerations--if they ever should. Rather, he looked to the problem of death for a key to war-time existence. "What I wanted to do," he says in his introduction, "was to create some sense of the dark and divine mysteriousness of war." Further on in the same passage he defines this:

> By divine I do not mean transcendent or noble or inspired or any grand thing at all. I mean that as you move inside the heart of war you are in a world other than the material one, or, at least, your truest and most penetrating moments in it are not material. And by this I do not mean any absurd romanticism. The fact that Sherriff's play

> Journey's End, which was entirely matter-of-fact from beginning to end, seems to me by far the truest picture of war as it was from 1914 to 1918 proves this. The truth about war is that the imminence, the commonness, of Death alters all your customary values of Life.[1]

The result is rather Gothic in its intensity, just suggesting the supernatural, or if one prefers the realistic definition of this sort of experience, the incomprehensible. The influence of Dostoevsky is unmistakable in The Dark Forest, but it must be remembered that the world Walpole describes with such accuracy is not the distorted vision of a paranoic, but real battle scenes. Upon reading serious war novels one is struck over and over again by this parallel between trench warfare reality and the torments men undergo in the psychological studies of Dostoevsky and Poe and Andreyev. The confusion of time, of sequence of events, the incapacity of the harried mind to connect the aspects of its immediate surroundings into a comprehensible picture, these were the result of being thrown into the bloodbath of the First War's attrition strategy, as well as the symptoms of paranoia. Walpole captured all this in The Dark Forest, but he went even further by working out a pattern of relationships that were created in the stress of

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1. Hugh Walpole, The Dark Forest, (1934), Introduction, p. vii.

the unnatural world of war. Here was not the simple reality he had seen to be the great thing in the Novel To Come.

The journalism was there, and the gradual progress of the fighting. Yet the plot stood apart from that aspect, drawing on it only for the means of interplay between the four main figures who struggle with death. The story unfolds via a narrator, not unlike Conrad's Marlow, who relates the history of a fellow Englishman in battle for some few months on the Russian front. Because Durward, the narrator, is English, the other awkward young Briton is drawn to him and on their first meeting makes the elder a confidant, a sort of father confessor. On the way to the front with their Red Cross unit Trenchard relates his past to the other in a burst of enthusiasm. For the first time in his life he is in love, and has just been accepted by the young lady, a Russian nurse with the group. But in his recitation to Durward of his unhappy childhood, he relates a dream that recurred all the time he was growing up. Nightmare is a more apt description; in it he is a member of a hunting party entering into a dark forest, but he is soon separated from the rest. The others are thrown off the track which he alone follows. Suddenly it would seem that he was the hunted rather than the hunter. And it was Death whom they were all hunting that found him.

If the dream is medieval in its context, the action's setting in western Russia is even more so. There is the same sort of dark forest, and a battle which is never seen, yet is everpresent in its sounds and in the wounded that are belched out of it. Everything is unreal, full of the dying and of violent sound, and lacking in any signs of the enemy other than his shells. Trenchard faces Death now with confidence because of his discovery of love. The girl, however, tires of his childishness and turns to another more sophisticated Russian surgeon who has fallen in love with her.

Here, Walpole has all the ingredients of a "simple reality" that is already somewhat complex in its nature. He heightens the psychological impact of the situation--and removes the last vestiges of this "simple reality"--by introducing two other Russian figures who strangely bear the same relationship to each other that comes to exist between Trenchard and his Russian rival. The girl is killed on a visit to a clearing station, and from here the story is concerned only with the relationship between the suitors. The war becomes a diabolus ex machina. The other two Russians, Dr. Nikitin and Andrey Vassielievitch, exist in the same condition. The latter is a gregarious buffoon much like Trenchard in his awkwardness and basic isolation, who had been married to an extraordinary woman. Nikitin, a far superior being,

had fallen in love with her and she with him, but she was unwilling to make her husband unhappy so they had existed as an unusual trio until the woman died. Then both men found some solace in each other's company. Upon them and upon the other two, Trenchard and Semyonov, the atmosphere of the fierce battle they are attending produces a terrible effect. The two pairs, of successful and unsuccessful lovers, find themselves vying for the company of Death. Each feels that if one of the pair is to die, to that one will go the final triumph of love. And it is the two "idiot" types that in the end are killed--by the same shell. Trenchard and Andrey Vassielievitch are triumphant in their deaths if only because the two remaining surgeons have no one with whom to talk about their love and to remind them of their women; and this is inevitable, Walpole seems to say, because the simpletons really "care more."

The novel never passes judgement on the war in a positive or negative manner. The time was to come when such a work would have been almost impossible, but in 1916 a book that on one level supplied a day-to-day description of life on the Russian front and at the same time used this description only as the background of a complex psychological tapestry was a creditable thing. War was horrible. It was a nightmare. But it offered an awakening to young Trenchard (a figure, by the way, bearing

an unusual resemblance to Walpole himself) which was a wonderful thing.

The forest is an unnatural, broken, blasted place hung with the drapes of war. Nothing is more grisly than the harrowing description of taking food into the heart of the forest to a village stricken with cholera, or as gripping as the confused trip across its wastes in search of a front-line battalion. But Walpole--being immersed in the writing of fiction and perhaps accepting the dictum that war is bad, but that once it has begun there is nothing for it but to win--doesn't rail at the horror, doesn't plea for humanity. His work has nothing of propaganda. In it he has found the setting of a mature, if somewhat romantic, novel, a work whose inherent mystical qualities would have been a miserable farce without the journalism of war to justify its psychological analysis of love and death. That the individual in battle could accept, indeed needed unusual values is brought home by descriptions of front-line action, descriptions coming not from the imagination but from life.

Lawrence's Women in Love depends on behaviour and beliefs as unusual, even as intangible, but it does not have the advantage of settings inherent with stress. Lawrence depended on poetical passages and metaphors to create his thesis--with the effect that passages of his work communicate very little at first reading.

Walpole, on the other hand, instead of trying to express an emotional state with poetic, metaphysical passages uses a flat description of an individual's view of his surroundings to convey his state of mind. With his war he could achieve the effect almost as competently with the native Russian scene as had the master Dostoevsky. Lawrence, of course employed symbolic settings as well. The two men have that in common, but it was not enough for the Midlands poet, or it was not his method. He preferred to set beside his natural symbols poetical descriptions of states of mind. And the result is that his work does not come across to the reader as quickly, or at all, while Walpole has caught the intangibles in a vivid habitat and so made them palatable. No wonder then that Walpole should be acclaimed the best of the younger generation of writers when the book appeared. George Swinnerton wrote:

> It was with The Dark Forest that Walpole really took unquestioned place as a leader of the then younger generation. I should say that for the first time he was still in a literary sense derivative, but he had seen and felt strange, thrilling things, and a literary tea-party was no longer his ideal form of entertainment. His ambitions had expanded.[1]

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1. Frank Swinnerton, The Georgian Literary Scene, (1935), p. 320.

It was not a reputation he retained any length of time. And one wonders if it wasn't the war which brought him full circle in the literary world. For the scenes he had worked with for a short period in Russia were being repeated ad infinitum in France, though in 1916 this was only just reaching the consciousness of the public at home. Much of the mood he had caught would have been impossible to describe with the knowledge of what was to come in the last two years of the war.

Those soldier-poets with which the chapter opened were all in the thick of it by the second full year of war, and along with a lot of others, their experiences were bitter in their mouths. For them there could be no impartial war setting. It was beginning to dominate their consciousness not as a poetic experience--trench duty was too sustained for that--but as an execrable torture. They too were experiencing the basic isolation of the individual which was a major concern of the new generation of writers. Combined with it, however, was a shared experience that identified them politically with a physical conflict that had always in the background the larger questions: "What the result? And what of society? Why has it happened?" The war's reply was simply to continue, now with no definite hope of a settlement in sight.

After the failure at Loos and the final withdrawal from Gallipoli in the winter of 1915, the offensive advantage fell to the Germans. They began the seven month siege of Verdun which was intended to slowly erode the French army and so weaken and break the vital link in the Entente's defense. Russia was considered paralyzed, Italy's army almost totally ineffective, and the mass of British strength out of reach in Britain--so the French were chosen as the dog to beat. On February 21st the attack began and the war became that much gloomier for the already dispirited Allies.

Far from having the bright prospects that sent British troops over the top at Loos and launched attack after attack against the Turks at Gallipoli, the conflict offered no hope at all for the future in early 1916. The Times in an editorial on January 1st could only look back regretfully upon the last year:

> The year which has witnessed such unparalleled endeavor on their part and on ours followed by so little apparent fruit, has been of necessity a season of care, of anxiety, of depression, and of disappointment. Again and again we were bidden to hope for some decisive success; again and again we have seen our hopes deferred.

On the Allied side an overall plan was adopted by all the nations for the first time. The idea was that they should launch a number of big and intensive offensives more or less

at the same time, but this was delayed by both Russia and Britain who needed time to prepare. The summer of the year was chosen as suitable.

The siege of Verdun somewhat disrupted the plan, and made earlier limited offensives a necessity to relieve the French. For of all the battles of the war, Verdun was the costliest, and when it finally ended in December, nine months after it had begun, the French army was severely crippled. Verdun, however, remained intact, and this surely was a victory for the Allies in spite of the terrible cost. Yet it made the French incapable of effectively sharing in the co-ordinated summer attacks, a factor which doomed the Somme offensive before it had begun.

The Russians were to make their last major effort in this year, and with reasonable success though at great cost. In the spring they launched a premature attack at Lake Narocz to relieve the German pressure at Verdun. Again, in June, they responded to Italy's appeal to prevent the Austrians from reinforcing their Trentino attack. This last effort, Brusilov's offensive, became a major victory, taking 200,000 Austrian prisoners in three days, but reserves were not available to follow up the attack and by the time the Russians had moved up reinforcements to exploit the advance the Germans had closed

most of the gaps. Rumania then took her fateful decision to enter the war on the Entente side--she was quickly crushed by an Austro-German offensive--but the balance remained.

In the west, the British army was left to superintend alone on the Somme the year's biggest bloodbath. As John Brophy has described it in his The Five Years: 1914-18: "For the British nation this prolonged battle or, more properly, series of assaults upon a fortified trench system was at the time, and is likely to continue to be in retrospect, the climax of the War."[1] Here Kitchener's army of volunteers proved their worth as a magnificent fighting force, and suffered so many casualties that conscription was proven a real necessity. Their pitiable misuse, the stupidity of the maneuvers they were given to undertake, the callousness of their generalship in attempting the same tactics again and again with the same inevitable result, these things not only destroyed the volunteer army which had risen out of the ashes of the professionals after Ypres, but they encouraged the growth of despair and pessimism among survivors and civilians alike. This is not to distract from the valor of the troops. Wave after wave swept across ground

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1. John Brophy, The Five Years: 1914-18, (1936), p. 57.

enfiladed by machine-gun fire and zeroed in by artillery. In the four months that the battle continued, 90,000 British officers and men lost their lives and another 290,000 were wounded or missing while German losses were less than half this.

In the Near East were recorded the only successes of the Entente--and even so they were not visible until the next year when Bagdhad fell. All in all, it had been a fruitless year for the Allies, promising very little for the next but the same tactics and proving that, far from being a defeated nation, the Germans still believed in their ability to win the war. Only the blockade imposed by the British navy stood in her way, or so it seemed.

At home the publishers' lists were demonstrating just how large was the interest in war. Popular fiction continued to exploit the wealth of new subjects, and in that way contributed to the building of the new war-time world and values. Though novels set in the past were almost as prevalent as those focusing on the excitement of the moment, they no longer represented the major interest of the reading public. Spy stories such as John Buchan's The Thirty-Nine Steps had enormous circulation. "Sapper," or H. C. Macneile, did as well with his frequent war studies. Just how the public itself was

reacting to the conflict was a frequent subject, but in 1916 the emphasis in this sort of work was still on its propaganda value. In the next few months, however, it was to be handled seriously by two old hands at journalistic novels of real portent. And with the appearance of Mr. Britling Sees It Through and The Pretty Lady it was not difficult to discern that the period of second thoughts about the Great War was over, and that a gloomier national mood was at hand.

IV

THE WAR YEARS: DISILLUSION

> L'avenir! L'avenir! L'oeuvre de l'avenir sera d'effacer ce present-ci, et de l'effacer plus encore qu'on ne pense, de l'effacer comme quelque chose d'abominable et de honteux. Et pourtant, ce présent, il le fallait, il le fallait! Honte à la gloire militaire, honte aux armées, honte au métier de soldat, qui change les hommes tour à tour en stupides victimes et en ignobles bourreaux. Oui, honte: c'est vrai, mais c'est trop vrai, c'est vrai dans l'éternité, pas encore pour nous. . . . Nous sommes encore perdus . . .
>
> Le Feu, H. Barbusse

The first year of the war could be described generally as a time of individual aspiration which distorted in the mind of the ordinary citizen the true meaning of modern fighting. The second, extending roughly from the Battle of Loos to the end of the Somme campaign, seems in contrast, to have been a period of gestation during which experience introduced the always-new tenets of its realities into the pot-pourri of righteous indignation, national conceit, and romantic visions of two-brigade wars.

In this way "the mood of a nation" tantalizes the social historian, presenting its concretes in patterns of abstractions that all too easily fall away into the dust of meaningless generalities. Yet from the vantage point of forty years, that time--what records are left of it--offers a reaffirmation of these shifting patterns of public sentiment which so forcefully reacted on and were affected by creative thinkers. In literature,

at least, the pattern is there, and an examination of the last two years of "Armageddon" offers an added proof of the validity of such evaluations.

One speaks today of "post-war scepticism," of "pessimism and meaninglessness," of "despair," as general qualities of the intellectual climate of the Twenties. These terms are not entirely satisfactory--if only because they have become too common and too quick on the tongue. But go to the work of the time; what you find will all too clearly explain the coinage of such literary and socio-historical generalities, if not justify it. Further, go back to the last two years of the war, and such "attitudes" will seem to have been an inevitable development. In fact, it is difficult to remember that these "attitudes" must be recognized as part of the much larger panorama of the Twentieth Century and something that was in the air long before the war had begun. Such considerations seem to weigh as nothing beside the formative effects of war experience. Experience

> . . . thumping
> And splashing the flood, deluging muck--
> The sentry's body; then, his rifle, handles
> Of old Boche bombs, and mud in ruck on ruck.
> We dredged him up, for killed, until he whined
> "Oh sir, my eyes--I'm blind--I'm blind, I'm blind!

A more sophisticated age has discovered the existential reply, "man endures." Men like Wilfred Owen must have recognized this peculiar, animal trait, else they would have written nothing,

but they were busy teaching something else in 1917-18, instructing the next ten, twenty years--or so they thought--in what they themselves had mastered by rote at the front. And small wonder that they were listened to, for what is more moving and more easily identifiable as modern than their plea?

> I try not to remember these things now.
> Let dread hark back for one world only; how
> Half listening to that sentry's moans and jumps,
> And wild chattering of his broken teeth
> Renewed most horribly whenever crumps
> Pummeled the roof and slogged the air beneath--
> Through the dense din, I say, we heard him shout
> "I see your lights!" But ours had long died out.[1]

1917-18 alternated in fortune, first for the Allies, then for Germany. But the true winners were the abstractions, Death and Apathy. At home and on the fronts war had become something grim, a spector that no longer could be shrugged off in conversation as though it were only a temporary spectacle. Both the Entente and the Central Powers were perilously near defeat in the third and fourth years of war, and both suffered such casualties as had never been dreamed of before. The carnage of Loos was nothing beside the British losses that followed on the Somme, and in the next year at Passchendaele. And the proof of this was in the pudding. By the spring of 1918 the B. E. F. was so depleted, in spite of more than two years of

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1. Wilfred Owen, "The Sentry," Poems of Wilfred Owen, edited by Edmund Blunden, (1931).

conscription, that the Germans were able to make the sort of break-through on the Western Front for which in the four previous years generals and politicians on both sides had so futilely sacrificed their armies.

This sense of desperation, of despair was coming home to literature as well in 1917, not only in poetry, but in fiction. The lead came, as might have been expected, from France. Throughout the war, the French campaign had been a much more depressing venture than that of their allies. French conscripts had the task of fighting on their own soil in an army twice the size of that of their main allies, and in a force that had been founded on the principle of conscription even before the war. And their temperament was such that those literary minded among them could express the horror that had enveloped them. As one British reviewer remarked upon the publication in French of Le Feu, "If an Englishman hated war as M. Barbusse hates it, he would not only not write about it, he would certainly not take part in it." He goes on to offer an interesting commentary on this new type of war fiction, and one that is relevant not only to the work written and published during the war, but also to much of the material that was to appear in the years following the armistice,

> Assuredly this idea that the present war is great and just because it is being waged to destroy war is not peculiar to France. Englishmen have fought and are fighting in it with as deep a conviction as that of M. Barbusse. But the one or the other passion wins the upper hand, the eye of the soul is misted, and the strange co-existence finds no expression.[1]

With most British novelists writing during the war this seems to have been exactly the case--whether the setting for their work was a home-front sitting room bereft of its men folk, or the trenches where active service was not only bearable but romantically attractive. To be sure, H. G. Wells in Mr. Britling Sees It Through (1916) had captured the essence of this peculiar duality of conviction and misery, but he chose to underscore for his readers "the necessity of getting on with it." The result was that his novel (and Joan and Peter, published in 1918) ceased almost to be a novel and became an essay, a brilliant piece of very topical propaganda that offered not a plot, but an argument. Yet, as Wells knew, he could only speak for his own generation, for the young were experiencing something entirely different. Their vision of life required and knew more than what was governed by the sparse set of rules tradition had given them to live by.

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1. Anonymous review, "Le Feu," Times Literary Supplement, April 5th, 1917, p. 164.

"Sapper," among others, seemed to have taken the measure of trench warfare in fiction, yet he was incapable of avoiding a sort of soldier's sentiment which reduced the emotions of all his heroes to the sentimental. No Man's Land (1917) was typical of his work, and it displayed another fault that had come to be too common in this type of novel. It was only a series of very loosely-connected episodes. After Beith's "unconscious" plot in The First Hundred Thousand, the war seemed to present itself in no recognizable pattern for popular writers.

With a more realistic tradition behind him, the French novelist was hardly restrained at all from setting down what he saw and felt. And unlike his British counterparts he found the time and the material to make serious fiction. René Benjamin's Gaspard was the first book of this type to reach the British public.[1] The French version had appeared in 1915, winning a large audience and the Prix Goncourt for the year. It was November of the next year before the work was translated--November, 1916, on the dismal tail end of the Somme campaign and at the beginning of the third winter of war with still no

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1. René Benjamin, Gaspard the Poilu, anonymous translator, (1916).

prospect for peace. Gaspard the Poilu was not unusual for its time. The process of creating out of a particular "type" of civilian soldier a representative set of picaresque adventures had become common practice by 1916. In fact, the majority of British war novels depended on such material. But in the "action" chapters of Gaspard--those dealing with the first battles of 1914 and the first of the trench warfare in the same year--there is a picture of the real inhumanity of war, of all its misery. The mud and the grotesque, senseless brutality of Frenchman and German murdering each other becomes more significant than any glory that could arise from the conflict. And it is what one remembers of the book.

A second, more pessimistic novel by Benjamin, Sous Le Ciel de France, appeared in the spring of 1917, but was never translated. For those who read French, however, here was a novel even more blunt in its realities.[1] Contemporary history and journalism, because of their constant vigil for the larger issues, the extraordinary heroism, the patriotic panegyric, were incapable of dealing with this aspect of the conflict. But

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1. Denis Thevain's Civilization 1914-17, (1918), and Georges Duhamel's Vie des Martyrs, (1917), were similar works published in the same period, but untranslated. It is difficult to estimate the audience such works achieved in England, but they were available and received reviews in several journals.

such pictures of misery and weariness were reaching the public, and partly through books such as Sous Le Ciel de France which, though they had only a limited audience in Britain, were "in the wind" and doing their part to direct the moods of the time. True, the sufferers in this fragmentary tale were French, but their agonies had to be identified with the trenches, and they were not a French prerogative alone. Characteristic of the flavour of the book was one episode, "L'homme aux Puces," in which an enterprising territorial dispensed from a sort of shed somewhere near the front, among other things, live vermin. For when a soldier became too contaminated with lice he was sent home for a few days to get clean. What could speak more eloquently of the misery of the front than this purchasing of a few days' respite?

Easter week, 1917, saw the publication of perhaps the best French novel that was to come out of the war. Another Prix Goncourt winner, Le Feu had even more impact on the British reading public than had Benjamin's crude realism. Within three months of its publication the novel had been translated as Under Fire. And here was a book, probably the first such work published in English, that laid bare the true and tragic significance of war without watering it with any of the usual accompanying platitudes and protestations of its necessity. Even

Gaspard had been tempered in this respect but Barbusse's "Story of a Squad," as its translation was subtitled, presented only men and war. More impressionistic than realistic, the novel also rested in that experimental tradition of fiction which has now come to characterize the early part of the Twentieth Century. But this was not at the cost of the reality of the novel's setting. From the very strange first chapter of the novel Barbusse makes it clear that he is writing not of subtle psychological changes in a few men, but of history itself, of The War, of the present moment. Under Fire is war. It is not about war, nor a story which employs war as a background. And herein, in 1917, lay the shock of the novel. The British novelist might write about men in battle, about battles and campaigns themselves, even about feelings in war time, but never while the war raged could he broach the one subject that lay behind all the others. Only a pacifist writer might have attempted such a thing; but then if he were a true pacifist he would never have had the necessary experience to write of it. The Briton who knew war as Barbusse did couldn't speak out, no matter what his feelings; he was too much involved in what he would have termed with usual

Anglo-Saxon reserve, "getting on with it."[1] This dilemma, in fact, seems to have disturbed more than a few younger men--it was later to be the crux of Siegfried Sassoon's personal stand in 1918, and afterwards a crucial aspect of his autobiographical novel, Sherston's Progress.

There could have been no truer picture of war in 1917 than that of Le Feu, and it is even hard to believe that any writer before or since has seen war as clearly as Barbusse. Just as the impressionist approach in painting heightens the over-all effect of a particular subject, so his method makes war a living thing, a force that rests not alone in its effects on men, but also within itself in its effects on life.

To achieve this comprehensive view Barbusse opens his novel with a passage describing a sanitorium at the moment when the first news of war breaks upon it. By this device both

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1. Barbusse's English counterpart did exist in the person of C. E. Montague. At 47 he was some seven years older than Barbusse. Both were beyond the age for active service, yet they enlisted in their respective armies as privates. They were established writers by 1914 and needn't have done so, but both felt it was demanded of them and went off with their much younger counterparts. It may be suggested that because both were invalided out of active service they lived to write of it, but this detracts neither from themselves nor their work. Montague, though his letters from the front were embittered and quite realistic, like most of his compatriots did not manage to get his horror and disgust into print until 1922 when he published Disenchantment. After that he fairly poured forth on the war, never seeming to get it completely out of his system.

sides are brought together, in the persons of German, Austrian, French, and Italian patients, into a mutual apprehension of what the conflict will mean. As they look down from their mountain sanctuary they seem to see "crawling things down there--Yes, as though they were alive--some sort of plant, perhaps--some kind of man." They see War, not two sides, one of which is right and one wrong; they see thirty millions hurled upon one another by guilt and anger in the mud and anguish of war.

After this the action moves down to the plain itself and the fighting. Barbusse's trick is to avoid in his study the actual conflict of man and man until he has blanked in the true character of war for its participants: the long hours of waiting, the filth, the appetites that are never satisfied, and the cold which every soldier counters in his own way--by improvisation. And this is accurate as well as effective, for the essence of trench warfare seems to have been interminable waiting between short periods of very intensive activity.

Again, he draws the joy of the survivors of a platoon that had occupied the front line for 24 hours and, without an attack, seen its ranks depleted by two-thirds of its original size. Or he pictures the dull lusting after life that the men find in their rest billets, the careful observations of farmyard poultry

while they wait with nothing to do. "On a eu des misères, mais on est bien maintenant." All his squad say this. It speaks for them, and one senses that all the soldiers who ever returned to the reserve areas from the front must have felt the same thing. Yet it had not found such moving expression in English before Le Feu was translated. "We've had hard times, but we're all right now." What speaks more eloquently of the day-to-day existence than this?

The same shade of mysticism that Walpole had found in the proximity of battle, Barbusse also introduced into Le Feu. The incident develops quite naturally with the appearance of a pretty refugee who seems to wander everywhere behind the lines. She is in love, it transpires, with one of the squad, and at the same time has driven another of them mad with love for her. Lamuse, the suffering, love-stricken soldier, takes it all silently, and when the battalion has been moved back to the front, it is he who discovers her decaying body in a blasted dugout. Of the squad, however, only the narrator discovers his secret, and he only to bring the mystery of death closer to his audience. It is a passage worthy of Balzac and reminiscent of the ending of Dostoevsky's The Idiot.

The whole of the novel is composed of such threads as the girl which are interwoven by circumstance through the lives of

the squad, until there remain only two of the original fourteen soldiers. Every chapter underscores a particular aspect of war. There is a discussion among the troops on the atmosphere of the Paris they had discovered as soldiers on leave, of the shirkers and cowards. And following this is a brutal sketch of a military execution--the soldier being shot for cowardice because, after two years of constant active service, his will broke momentarily during an attack.

The battlefield may distort, but again and again the truth of Barbusse's experience comes through the strangely surreal scenery. Every chapter hammers home its lesson that "this is war, real war," not the propaganda that must be spoon-fed the population at home. And if his careful brushwork on an attack were not enough to bring home to the British reader the real nature of war, the closing chapters of the book served as a brand that would sear open any eyes. The plea for justification that Corporal Bertrand raised, the question he asked, could only be answered by the future. For the cry came from such an agony as the world had not known before. To make it speak for itself Barbusse goes to the fantastic for his ending, to a sort of symbolic purge by water after the original "cleansing by fire."

> La fin du jour répand une sombre lumière grandiose sur cette masse forte et intacte de vivants dont une partie seulement vivra jusqu'à la nuit. Il pleut--toujours de la pluie qui se colle dans mes souvenirs à toutes les tragédies de la grande guerre.[1]

The men are sent on a fatigue party during the night and by the morning, when they are completely lost, the battlefield has turned into a sea of mud. All the trenches are canals of water whose crumbling sides make them impossible to clamber out of. Only those lucky enough to claw their way into no-man's land have survived, and the novel ends with German and Frenchman alike weighted down in the mud, imprisoned side by side in their suffering, as if in the most horrible of nightmares. Their hope and their despair rests with the future. It is their last cry. "Si la guerre actuelle a fait avancer le progrès d'un pas, ses malheurs et ses tueries compteront pour peu." And it is this which places Le Feu among the few great novels that have been written of the war.

Barbusse dealt with the agony of the individual--dealt with it at a time when for many there seemed to be nothing but agony left in the world. Both France and Britain had been carried near the limit of their endurance yet there was no end

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1. Henri Barbusse, Le Feu, (1917), p. 244.

in sight. All that had gone on before seemed so much waste. So, it seemed that Barbusse's picture, if one may judge by the letters and verse and prose works of British soldiers, was a very accurate one. But Barbusse was unique in his approach to the war, and in this uniqueness lies the key to the artistic success of Le Feu. He could still find, even while he was horrified, a vindication over and above patriotism and so view the war as a whole rather than as only the tragedy of an individual.

By and large, in the fall of 1917 those sensitive men who had seen active service for a year or more were beginning to wonder just how justifiable the carnage was that they were witnessing among their own friends. As Robert Nichols has pointed out in his very admirable preface to Anthology of War Poetry: 1914-1918, the British poet and/or writer on active service had only a very limited view of the war. The vision of a front-line junior officer or enlisted man could extend, at the most, no further than the activities of his own regiment. Yet in a modern international war it is not the regiments, nor even the brigades which may be considered as the smallest significant fighting unit. It is the division; and more often than not the making of history is done by the hammer blows of even larger units, of armies

or army groups. With life and death struggles being pursued on such a grand scale, it is little wonder that the individual immersed in the agony of his own limited surroundings could be impressed by the seeming futility and waste of the death agonies of his own section or battalion.

The limited scope of the personal tragedies described in the verse that came out of the war is the very thing that kept it from being "great" poetry. Futility, unless it is handled by a true master of the art, cannot make masterpieces. Its expression tends to degenerate into seemingly "affected" pacifist propaganda unless larger themes are interwoven within its core. This is what Barbusse attempted in prose, and succeeded in doing, but not at the cost of glossing over the horror of his soldiers' visions. However, the real lesson the novel held for its British as well as its French readers in 1917 was not that the war offered scope for good literature. It witnessed that trench warfare wasn't something which could be laughed off as a creation of Bruce Bairnsfather in his more sardonic cartoons. Le Feu spoke for the soldier who had survived two years in the trenches and saw no hope of escaping them.

Even if the British soldier had as yet to truly express himself in prose, his home-front counterpart had at least

discovered works that spoke for what he saw around him. And the stress of war had become very real at home by 1917. H. G. Wells' fluctuations themselves served as a measure of the force the war experience was exerting on the individual civilian author. Always a social reformer at heart, Wells was obliged, as he states in his Experiment in Autobiography, "to thrust this false interpretation /that it was a war to end war/ upon it, and assert, in spite of my deep and at first unformulated misgivings, that here and now, the new world order was in conflict with the old."[1] Not until 1916 (he wrote in 1934) did he "get an effective consistent grip upon the war." But before then he had begun the arduous task of documenting the process of his thoughts on the conflict. At the end of 1914 he had set to work on a piece of fiction that was, in a sense, autobiographical.[2] But Wells was not satisfied with presenting one mind. He saw the hero of Mr. Britling Sees It Through "not so much a representation of myself as of my type and class." In catching the sense of

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1. H. G. Wells, Experiment in Autobiography, (1934), p. 668.
2. H. G. Wells, Mr. Britling Sees It Through, (1916).

tragic disillusionment in a mind as the cruel facts of war came to dominate everything else in life, his book ceased to be a novel proper. For Wells sought an answer to his hero's dilemma, partially to express his type's desire "to find some reassurance amidst that whirlwind of disaster," and as a result Mr. Britling Sees It Through changed from a rather loosely-constructed novel into a Wellsian religious tract. Mr. Britling, in brief, had "found God." Writing of this conversion some years later Wells could explain it light-heartedly away:

> Everywhere in those first years of disaster men were looking for some lodestar for their loyalty. I thought it was pitiful that they should pin their minds to "King and Country" and such like clap-trap, when they might live and die for greater ends, and I did my utmost to personify and animate a greater, remoter objective in God The Invisible King. So by a sort of "coup d'etat" I turned my New Republic for a time into a divine monarchy.[1]

Here was Wells, then, really no more than echoing his old call to revolt that had so long been the backbone of his writing. And, ironically enough, in the work that was written part in answer to his own previous conviction that the "war that will end war" had arrived and that the "new world order" was in conflict with the old, there seemed to be the same exhortation to the cause of Britain that he had condemned in his cursory

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1. Wells, Experiment in Autobiography, p. 673.

comments on the slogan "For King and Country." Whether or not Mr. Britling Sees It Through was intended as propaganda, it was taken as such by more than one reader.[1] To be sure, Wells had aligned himself with a pro-war audience; and he admitted as much:

> Whatever I wrote or said went to an exasperating accompaniment of incredulity from the left, and I felt all the virtuous indignation natural to a man who has really been in the wrong. I was in the wrong and some of the things I wrote about conscientious objectors in War and the Future were unforgivable. I turned on the pacifists in Joan and Peter, savaged them to the best of my ability, imputed motives, ignored honorable perplexities and left some rankling wounds. Some of the war-time pacifists will never forgive me and I cannot complain of that.[2]

His solution to the dilemma (arising out of his own self-contradiction) was not dissimilar to that which was introduced by Barbusse into his corporal's plaintive cry for the future. The Allies must win, Wells reasoned, in order to clear the way for his world state of the future. It was this and this alone which made the war a necessary evil to be seen through to its finish.

Yet, for all of these flaws, Mr. Britling Sees It Through was a fair representation of the British scene during the first

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1. See footnote on page 32, Chapter II.

2. Wells, Experiment in Autobiography, p. 679.

three years of war. One can trace in it the progress of the first wave of optimism that swept the body politic of the British public, the darker second thoughts that followed, the realization, through immediate personal losses, of the suffering entailed in war, and the development of a real need for solace and explanations on the part of the sufferers.[1] These things alone mark the book as a social document of some importance. The proof of Wells' analysis of the needs of his time was amply demonstrated by the success of the work when it appeared in September, 1916. In the seven months that followed, it went through eighteen editions.

The novel is not as good as his satiric tragedy, Tono-Bungay, nor even on a par with his most noteworthy social study in fiction, Ann Veronica, for it lacks the form which is intrinsic to both of these; but it does remain readable as an interesting social treatise.

Arnold Bennett, the second of that remarkable Edwardian duet, although limiting his propaganda to non-fiction, was just as blatent in his "war efforts" as was the equally vigorous Wells.

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1. This may be more clearly appreciated in light of the autobiographical nature of the work. The setting is very nearly Wells' own home in Essex, and several of the characters are easily recognizable as actual acquaintances of the author.

During the war it became clear that with both men writing had become almost a compulsion which led them to wield the pen indiscriminately without too much thought for the permanence of their work. Much of their war effort was in the form of journalism. They seemed to need time to digest the new atmosphere around them before they dealt with it in fiction. But this by no means meant that either ruminated for long periods. Frank Swinnerton pictured the war-time Bennett as a man absorbed in responsibilities:

> /He/ was swallowed up in it, as husband (for Mrs. Bennett, being French, was at once tragically agitated by the fate of her country), as journalist, and finally as an active force in the Ministry of Information, to the directorship of which he was in the end appointed. For Bennett the war years were years of intense pressure, literary, political, and social. . . . He had been a novelist; he had found himself an active publicist. He had been devoted to the arts; he found himself called upon "to sustain the morale of civilian populations."[1]

And if Wells' Mr. Britling had been the first reasonably accurate report of war-time England in the conflict's initial stages, Bennett's major effort in this direction was perhaps the best analysis of that society as it had evolved by 1917. The Pretty Lady was published in April, 1918, on the eve of

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1. Swinnerton, Georgian Literary Scene, pp. 190-91.

disaster--for Germany had begun her last major effort in Flanders, and had succeeded where the Entente had failed: they had broken the trench barrier.

The novel was well suited to this mood, for Bennett had turned with unusually heavy-handedness upon the society that he had for so long chided and flattered in his popular novels. The reason was not far to seek. It lay equally in the dreariness of a war seemingly without end, and in Bennett's disgust with the behaviour of the society he knew and had admired. Just as the war had changed Wells, it affected the middle-aged chronicler of "The Five Towns," and the gradual distillation of the stuff of The Pretty Lady is easily seen in his experience of the period.

There was the first wave of optimism which led him to write to Hugh Walpole on April 1st, 1915, "Everybody high up seems to be perfectly confident about the war, and I have myself laid bets to the sum of £25 that hostilities cease by the end of July."[1] Later in the year he visited the Western Front as a correspondent, and what he saw seemed to have left an unpleasant impression, for he returned in no mood to write. His wife, in My Arnold Bennett, states that his nerves went all

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1. Reginald Pound, Arnold Bennett, (1952), p. 255.

wrong. He refused to talk of his experiences, wrote only correspondence, and stayed in bed for days. The position of being a civilian immune (by age) from the hazards of war seemed to have come home to him while he was on this trip. Reginald Pound recounts an episode taking place in France which easily explains this. A general commented to him, "So you've come to watch other people do things." Bennett, understandably, was somewhat annoyed at this, but it did in fact point out his position in no uncertain terms. He was only an observer.

By the end of 1916 work and friends (notably those fellow writers who wanted him to procure them immunity from war service) so occupied him that he had no time for a rest or a holiday. The number of war committees he was chairman of is astounding. In April of the next year Bennett finished his appendix to the Clayhanger trilogy, The Roll Call, which brought the five-towns characters up to the war itself and ended with the enlistment of George Cannon in the artillery. According to the entries in his journal, a few weeks after Bennett had finished the proofs of this work he "had an idea for a short novel about an episode in the life of a French cocote." A week later he decided to transfer the setting of his proposed novel from Paris to London. It was a very important change for

by this Bennett removed his work from the realm of his previous Parisian study, The Lion's Share, and embroiled it in the hard crust of his own society and that of his readers. One feels that much of the moral criticism which his book received would have been avoided had the setting remained Paris, but much of the point of what he was attempting would also have been lost. What Bennett saw around him in these last years of the war had shocked and disgusted him, and in describing it to his readers he in turn severely upset them. The book when it appeared in April, 1918, was condemned as pornography by a great many. In his Things That Have Interested Me there is a brief record of an encounter with one woman who "was very distressed indeed" because Bennett had failed his great responsibility of "leading the young." It was a common reaction. The Pretty Lady was not the Bennett his readers were used to, or had come to expect.

Broadly speaking, the novel is a brief history of a whore driven by the war from Paris to London. Inasmuch as this was simply another subject for a realistic study in the vein of George Moore and others, there was nothing to be held against it. But Christine, the heroine, had the effrontery to become involved with an amiable bachelor of some means who circulated among the smart set. The world that was revealed was just a

bit too near home and much more accurately defined than seemed "decent." Furthermore, Bennett found it germain to his task to caricature the less-advertised fate of civilians, both good and . . . less so. The main male figure of the novel, a rather too proper middle-aged gentleman, suffers a fate with his investments that, although it was all too common, wasn't mentioned in the best circles. Inadvertently, he began to prosper from the war--so much so in fact, that one might have applied the slanderous term of "profiteer" to him, though with less justice than was usual with the application of the insult. Added to this and to his taste for French courtesans, G. J. Hoape became embroiled in one of those infinite number of war committees that were created after 1915. There is the barest suggestion here that Bennett, in the vein of his earlier satires such as Buried Alive and The Card was working with a composite figure derived from the society of the time. But The Pretty Lady was a bitter indictment of that society in times of stress, not an off-hand chuckle at its eccentricities.

Bennett's description of the funeral of Lord Roberts, one of the very patriotic displays of 1915, ripped to shreds the pretentions of its participants whose presence was gained by privilege and influence alone.

> There were in particular women the names and countenances and family history of whom were familiar to hundreds of thousands of illustrated newspaper readers, even in the most distant counties, and who never missed what was called a "function," whether "brilliant," "exclusive," or merely salicious. At murder trials, at the sales of art collections, at the birth of musical comedies, at boxing matches, at historical debates, at receptions in honour of the renowned, at luscious divorce cases, they were surely present. . . . And they were here. And no one could divine why or how or to what eternal end.[1]

Or there is his introduction of Lady Queenie Paul as she entered G. J's committee, an enthusiastic war worker who "had had ten lessons in First Aid in ten days, had donned the Red Cross, and gone to France with two motor cars and a staff and a French maid in order to help in the great national work of nursing wounded heroes." But perhaps the most cynical, the most blasphemous vision is that of a soldier on leave from the front, whose only comfort is found in the character of the courtesan who discovers an odd spiritual satisfaction in devoting her attentions to him. Out of this rises the vague mist of war-time melancholy that pervades the novel and that shocked its 1918 audience.

Because of these adventures her patron, G. J., abandoned the very likable creature to the ardours of her profession,

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1. Arnold Bennett, The Pretty Lady, (1918), pp. 47-48.

but the tragedy of the episode goes deeper than that--a fact which does a great deal to explain the distaste which The Pretty Lady aroused. It was Christine, the Parisian, who came nearest to understanding the soldier, not his fellow countrymen, nor even his relatives. And thus it was only she who could administer to his needs. In this light, Bennett's last comments in the novel on its characters and the epoch take on a bitterly ironic, yet curiously sympathetic tone.

> The supreme lesson of the war was its revelation of what human nature actually was. And the solace of the lesson, the hope for triumph, lay in the fact that human nature must be substantially the same throughout the world. If we were humanly imperfect, so at least was the enemy.[1]

Needless to say, the book enjoyed a considerable commercial success, in spite of the accusations that were leveled at Bennett. In his book Reputations, (1920), Douglas Goldring leveled the charge that the novel (and all of Bennett's work after 1910) was written with "admirable commercial astuteness" and goes on to say that Bennett always thought first of the susceptibilities of his readers and the libraries.[2] This was an unduly harsh judgement of a book which was so obviously inspired by the state of affairs in war-time London. And what Goldring

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1. Ibid., p. 327.

2. Douglas Goldring, Reputations, (1920).

deprecatingly termed its "dash of war-time other worldliness" is exactly what fascinates one who returns to the novel today. An air raid is perfectly transfixed in prose for one to consider. A description of women workers in a munitions factory comes to life as a vivid and memorable thing. The melancholy of war, of course, pervades everything in the book, but one feels that it was that way, that it could not have been captured better in any vignette of the period. To say, however, that The Pretty Lady was any more than a good, clever novel would have been incompatible even with Bennett's feelings about the book. Yet it rises above the few serious novels published in 1918 as the best of the lot.

The literary landmarks of this third phase of the war were, by and large, novels whose setting rested outside the confines of war-time society. In 1917 two major works had been published, the first being James Joyce's Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man (February) and the second, Norman Douglas's South Wind (June). Joyce's novel was important for its innovations and experiment in technique, and the latter for its unusual structure and the tone which governed its narrative. South Wind, though written in the same vein as the work of Sterne and Peacock, was rather more contemporary than it is generally given credit for. Both works stood as some proof that the

introspective and analytical qualities of modern fiction were developing, as it were, outside the war, although the conflict itself must certainly have reinforced such tendencies within individual writers like Lawrence. In addition, South Wind was undoubtedly a delightful prelude to the work of Huxley and the later Woolf, and of Evelyn Waugh in the '30's. Its very careful vivisection of a small society also had affinities with Conrad's classic, Nostromo, but such a suggestion might seem blasphemous to devotees of the master-mariner, as both plot and moral have proved difficult qualities to define in South Wind. Both do exist, however, though not in a manner familiar to readers in 1917. For plot was necessary to convey Douglas's lesson--that the truest moral values stem from amorality.

A third such "new" work appeared in June, 1918, introducing into fiction somewhat of an exposition parallel in development to abstraction in modern art and to the new imagism in poetry. Wyndham Lewis was, of course, artist and poet before he turned novelist. Thus, the style of Tarr was not as surprising as it otherwise might have been.[1] The novel was written during 1914-15,

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1. P. Wyndham Lewis, Tarr, (1918). The novel first appeared in serial form in The Egoist magazine and was apparently written to contract for that journal.

and as Lewis freely admitted, was closely bound up with the historical events of the time, even though the idea for the book had existed as early as 1907. In a prologue--which was completely removed from the rewritten version published in 1928--Lewis confessed that though he had not "produced the disagreeable German [Kreisler, the real hero of the novel] for the gratification of primitive partisanship aroused by war," he let him out at that moment "in the undisguised belief that he is very apposite." The novel exists on one plane as an exposé of a peculiar German mentality which had in it all the elements necessary to launch a self-destroying war, not once but twice in thirty years. Tarr, then, could seem a simple allegory of national prides worked out among bourgeois-Bohemian artists in a quarter of Paris. And the prologue does lead the reader in this direction, for it identifies Kreisler with "the myriad of Prussian germs, gasses, and gangrene released into the air and for the past year [1915] obsessing everything." This and the fact that the novel was written hurriedly, just before Lewis enlisted in the Royal Artillery, moved him to rewrite Tarr so as to eliminate the breath of those first months of war-time enthusiasm--quite justifiably, though the work was by no means spoiled by that sort of contemporaneity.

It was both form and context which set Tarr above the ordinary, for Lewis had begun not with the mental equipment of the novelist,

but with those of the artist-cum-philosopher. Accordingly the prose of Tarr was difficult to read until one became accustomed to it, but the honest originality of the author's clipped sentences, each counterpointed against the next and full of unusual images, was enough to attract the reader's attention even if the ideas behind them seemed, at times, unnecessarily obscure. The work of Gertrude Stein, and Joyce, and Djuna Barnes, to name a few, was to develop within the Twentieth-Century reader a familiarity of sorts with such vagueries, and even somewhat of a taste for them, but Tarr, along with South Wind and Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man, was one of those works that had to break ground for the "moderns," to set the stage for the "new" as opposed to the Victorian novel.

Style alone did not make Tarr something unusual. It also was a novel without a conventional plot. Rather, psychological reactions and development of character assumed the duties of the mechanics of structure. They did not, then, fill out the skeletal base of the novel so much as they grew from themselves, carrying the "skeleton" along with them. As in South Wind the world of this work was one that was completely new to its readers. From the first Kreisler is "doomed evidently" as the chapter introducing him was called, and the novel follows his

course relentlessly until he finally hangs himself in a small border village. But Lewis did not write of this in a tragic vein. He was vehemently satiric about it, just as he was about the whole of the limited society he described. And as a consequence, tragedy in this type of fiction seemed almost unattainable, perhaps because there was too much of it to be seen in the day-to-day progress of the war.

Lewis had struck a genuinely "new" note in fiction, one that was appropriate as well to the instability of the 1917-18 period. For by then the serious writer had no choice but to be contemporaneous, to march in step ahead of or beside the time, or to make time keep pace with him. The British novelist was, like his countrymen, caught up in the modern world and identified with it. Whether he wished it or not, politics (in the general, not the limited, sense of the word) had become a part of his sustenance, just as much as sensibility had been thirty or forty years before. Though this tendency in fiction toward using the ultra-contemporaneous for its subject matter and the treatment of it had been much in evidence since the beginning of the century, it was the halting progress of the war which drew it into full blossom--in the same way the conflict had done its share to further the "inward-turning" or introspective quality of the prose of men like Lawrence. And side by side with this went a mood that also had risen out of the war.

Because a nation couldn't draw a curtain over an enormous failure like the Somme, but had to carry on only 600 or 1000 yards further east, there seemed to be no progress in the war, either toward defeat or victory. Fighting on the Western Front looked to be an interminable killing match in which the only visible intent was to exhaust either one's own resources or those of the enemy. So depression became a general state of mind in 1917, the blackest year of the war for the Allies. And when the war descended personally on the individual or the family, or when the whole nation suffered an irreplaceable loss such as it did after a tragic miscalculation like Passenchdaele, this depression was replaced by genuine despair.

Overt disillusionment with the leadership of the generals first appeared in the French army, which had in the previous year suffered at Verdun the grimmest siege warfare that the conflict had produced. On May 2nd, 1917, a colonial regiment went into open revolt and refused to attack as ordered. The rebellion spread to the five French armies that had just taken part in the second battle of the Aisne, and in all there were 110 "grave" cases of "collective indiscipline," affecting 54 divisions. No less than 23,000 verdicts of guilty were passed by Courts Martial; 435 death sentences were announced and eventually 55 men were shot, the rest being sent to the penal

colonies. It was the middle of July before a calm was restored, but even then the French weren't fit for pushing forward the planned offensive which had seemed both plausible and wise at the end of 1916.

In the interim it was necessary not only for the British to take over more of the line but to continue their offensive in order to tie down the Germans. One of the few brilliant triumphs for the Allies that was to come out of the war took place then at the Battle of Messines Ridge; though it was only a small tactical victory for the British, it was an important morale booster that came at a moment when it was most needed. Russia had ceased to be an effective force in March when revolution swept the country. This, combined with the breakdown of French morale, had more than counterbalanced the entry of the United States into the war the same spring. Both sides realized that it would be some time before this new combatant could mobilize her enormous resources and play a major role for the Entente. And in the meantime Germany seemed capable of so striking as to paralyze her enemies. With this in mind, the Passchendaele campaign, as the third battle of Ypres has come to be known, was opened by the British army on July 31st. Here the horrible cataclysm of mud in Barbusse's Le Feu became a reality for the attacking troops. They were

sent into action on a front which was a reclaimed marsh, in weather that held little prospect for anything but rain, and against German emplacements which had been specifically designed for use in the conditions the British command seemed totally ignorant of.

As a result of heavy pre-attack bombardments the artificial drainage system of the area was completely destroyed. The whole of the battlefield was then inundated, making any advance practically impossible. Two months of advance preparation behind British lines had forewarned the Germans, and they were prepared for the offensive before it began. They were also armed with a new gas, mustard gas, which affected not only the lungs, but any exposed skin. Yet, during the very protracted battle, the British command seemed to have deluded itself into the belief that the Germans were suffering so much that they would soon be short of reserves, when in fact they were able to release eight Western Front divisions to reinforce the Austrians in Italy. But the most damning comment on the generalship came in the form of an incident involving Field Marshal Haig's chief of staff, Lieutenant-General Sir Launcelot Kiggell. When he first visited the battle-front near the end of the campaign he is reported to have

become increasingly uneasy as his car neared the Ypres salient. Finally he burst into tears, crying, "Good God, did we really send men to fight in that?"

The rest of the Passchendaele story could be witnessed in the casualty lists that returned to Britain. They were enormous. In the last six months of 1917 British losses on the Western Front were 5,741 officers killed and 16,575 missing or wounded, and 70,262 other ranks killed and 355,036 missing or wounded.[1] How could one miss the significance of these figures as one read the "lists" in The Times from day to day?

In Italy the worst blow of 1917 befell the Entente. The Austrians, reinforced with German divisions, broke through at Caporetto in the fall and succeeded in completely crumbling the Italian line. The Italian army had been in a state similar to that of the French army in April of the same year, and when the blow did fall, it disintegrated into a mass of men momentarily finished with war and all it meant.[2]

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1. Brophy, The Five Years, p. 258.

2. Ernest Hemingway has written some of the most memorable fiction of the war on this retreat. A Farewell to Arms is precise enough for the progress of the real retreat to be traced, and he has captured superbly the disintegration of the army during the retreat.

The line was eventually reformed at the River Piave, but by then the damage had been done. Italy ceased to be an effective ally, and Austrian morale had been re-established securely enough to insure at least another six months of co-operation with her allies.

Thus the stage was set for Ludendorff's final effort in France before American reinforcements arrived. Because of the Entente collapse on other fronts the Germans were able to marshal 192 divisions in France against the Allies' 173. With this temporary numerical advantage, Ludendorff was prepared to risk all in one gigantic effort for a break-through. The battle began on March 21st, 1918, in ideal conditions. For the British and French this date marked the grimmest moment of the war. Their defenses crumbled just as had those of the Italians five months before. The whole of the northwestern trench system was driven back in severe disorder. Only after a month of bitter fighting did the then over-extended and exhausted German effort come to a stand-still, almost but not quite a success. They had made the largest advance on the Western Front since the Battle of the Marne, had left the British with "their backs to the sea," had forged the two main partners of the Western Front under a unified command which had up to then been necessary but unobtainable, and yet

had lost any hope of winning the war. Though few Britons at home or in the trenches realized it, the Central Powers had begun their death struggles.

In the meantime, however, the German submarine offensive had succeeded in further depressing the civilian population of the Isles with a blockade that was so successful that rationing had to be instituted in the spring of 1918. Air raids had continued as well throughout the last two years of the war. The German offensive seemed to prolong itself in fits and bursts until the middle of July, and with almost every attack they gained some limited success. But Ludendorff was only over-extending himself. In the end, these advances were to cost him much more than they gained.

There was one last trial awaiting friend and foe alike. Toward the end of June a world-wide flu epidemic ravaged both sides, at home and in the trenches; the fourth and final horseman of the Apocalypse had offered his services to the warring nations.

On August 8th, the Allied offensive began which was to signal the final phase of the war, the turning of fortune for the last time. Within two months the Central Powers had disintegrated and the Germans had fallen back to the Meuse. Yet the armistice still was unexpected enough to be a surprise

to a war-weary nation. The abandon of that day witnessed the relief it meant, and in a sense it was a prophetic sign, as one or two novelists were to realize, of just what was to come in the next years. But again, such comments lead to generalities that must be supported with facts. The armistice meant the war was over November 11th, 1918. But it had nothing to do with the final effects of the conflict. There were the tangibles that rested in figures of casualties and deaths, and in the names that had become material for Who Was Who; and there were the intangibles that one caught glimpses of in the feeble efforts of man to express himself, things that couldn't be said directly in November, 1918, even if they were known. But they were there. The leading article for the Times Literary Supplement of November 14th contained them, strangely enough, in a vaguely familiar form:

> In all things, we well know, we are unequal to the events of this hour. Not only cannot we express what we feel; we cannot even feel what we would express. We are dazed spectators of that which but lately we thought we ourselves were doing. We watch the will working in the world, and know now that it is not our will. For four years we have talked of the moral law and trusted in it with more less of faith. We spoke of it to each other, so that we might still believe in it, while again and again it did not seem to work. Only we worked, in a universe indifferent to our labour and faith.

Little need be said of the direct effects of the war. They speak for themselves. 702,410 Britons lost their lives in the five years. Another 1,622,625 were casualties, and no few of

them died as a result of their wounds.[1] The number of "Letters" and "Diaries" that were published posthumously even before 1918 are evidence of the literary promise that was lost. Bernard Adams, R. E. Vernede, G. B. Smith, John Brown, Donald Hankey, Alan Seeger, Enzio Valentine, Joseph Keeling: these were but a few who might have written more than some letters, or some observations on trench life, or a few schoolboyish poems. They didn't.

In the face of all that it was no wonder, then, that a philosophy of meaninglessness should envelop the literature of the nation. One could hardly expect this third phase, that of disillusion, to vanish with the war. The future had to speak for itself, but it could not ignore the immediate past. As Barbusse had written, "L'oeuvre de l'avenir sera d'effacer ce présent-ci, et de l'effacer plus encore qu'on ne pense, de l'effacer comme quelque chose d'abominable et de honteux."

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1. Brophy, The Five Years, p. 240.

V

THREE MAJOR WORKS

> They had nothing; not even their own bodies, which had become mere implements of warfare. They turned from the wreckage and misery of life to an empty heaven, and from an empty heaven to the silence of their own hearts. They had been brought to the last extremity of hope, and yet they put their hands on each other's shoulders and said with a passionate conviction that it would be all right, though they had faith in nothing but in themselves and in each other.
>
> F. Manning, Her Privates We

The war did not waste away into a victorious, but rather drab armistice. In Britain at least, it ended with a resounding bang. After four years of cyclical moods of depression, optimism, then depression again, the end had to be witnessed to be believed. And in spite of one false start in the week before, November 11th, Armistice Day, was an occasion for wild celebration, a climax to the four years and an end to it. If war experience had taught anything to civilians and soldiers alike, it was a belief in the moment and a faith in its meanings; and in England the supreme moment seemed to have arrived. "We've had hard times, but we've come through," was a thought that struck one and all. The difficulties, and the whimpers that were a major aftermath of the war were still to come. The cynicism and despair that had become so common in the last years of the war were forgotten in the excitement of victory. Yet in only ten years the whole tenor

of the war that ended with the frenzied abandon of November 11th, 1918, would be changed in the minds of the British public.

In fiction the "Great War" as the subject or setting of a novel would carry with it the implications of a moral stand in the national literary controversy. And this controversy, it may be added, would rest, not in the simple and perennial discrepancy between realist and romantic, but in a much more complex opposition of principles that set pacifism against militarism, the individual point of view against the collective one, and the "horror school" against the "comradeship school" of war fiction.

Controversy, however, cannot be depended upon to produce good fiction, and such a personal and yet nationwide problem did in fact prove to be more a handicap than an advantage in the creating of a war novel of some merit. At least, it would be fair to say that of the four or five British novels of the war which stand out above all the rest, three of them lack more than superficial ties with the overt partisanship which characterized this debate. And of the three, two were completed before the controversy had assumed such major proportions. The other, though published in 1929, contains a preface that proclaims an intent of objectivity on the part of the author, and it is partly because of

this intent that the novel stands as a true fictional monument to the war.

There was (and is forty years later) little agreement among the generations who participated in and grew up just after the war as to what novels were most worthy of attention. An artillery man almost certainly would have called Gilbert Frankau's Peter Jackson, Cigar Merchant the finest--because it reflected just his experience. By the same token an educated member of the naval arm would have proclaimed William McFee's Command a war novel written in the great tradition of Conrad. Again, the younger members of the "lost" generation, though non-participants in the war, might have found in Aldington's Death of a Hero or in Sassoon's Sherston novels a complete--and therefore, for them, very significant--statement of their beliefs about the war. And precisely because of these judgements that were resolved by an immediate emotional experience, because of the "contemporaneity" implied by these reader identifications, the novels seem guilty, if only by association, of a certain sentimentality that is hardly compatible with really good fiction.

Now, all the war novels of this period (1918-35) suffered such a burden to some degree, and the problem of "contemporaneity"

in fiction had been in existence even before the war, indeed had developed during the Edwardian era. The writing of one's time in terms of one's time, however, need not so bias a novel politically or otherwise that it becomes merely fictional propaganda.

Ford Madox Ford, R. H. Mottram, and Frederick Manning, all managed to produce accurate portraits of the war that were modern in every sense, yet neglected the violent moral judgements of the large body of war fiction. And it is partly this other sort of "contemporaneity" that places their work on a stature with that of the school of moderns represented by Lawrence, Woolf, and Huxley. For though they avoided the hasty judgements, they did catch in their writing that sense of individual isolation which typifies the post-war novel. It is their works, Ford's Tietjens novels, Mottram's Spanish Farm Trilogy, and Manning's Her Privates We, which represent the very best in war fiction and are the most worthy of a more detailed analysis.

Ford's work incorporated a concern with technique and a discriminating awareness of the panorama of his time so well that the two, method and subject, blended into a unity which few writers could have improved upon. The key to all this

was time. As Gertrude Stein explained its significance for literature, "Time in the composition and time of the composition."[1]

A philosophical revolution of sorts had begun before the turn of the century that was in turn to infect literature in much the same way as had the disintegration of the mediaeval world order some three hundred years before. Henri Bergson and the scientific school of philosophers that had followed him had robbed the intellectual world of that stability chronological time seemed to offer--stability which was so much a part of the Victorian tradition. In turn, relativity theory and Heidegger's principle of indeterminancy had seemed to expose life as a dynamic formlessness, a variable flowing rather than an unchanging being. It was inevitable that such ideas would reach literature and make demands of it that had hardly been conceived of before.

To a few gifted writers this new sense of time seemed a challenge and an opportunity. The time of their own world belonged to such definitions as were being forged by the philosophers and scientists. They found that the time in

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1. Quoted in Composition as Explanation," a lecture given at Cambridge University and later published in the Hogarth Essays, (1926).

fiction offered a new approach to the old problem of form. Time in the composition and time of the composition, they had discovered, were more or less interdependent. The one was a means of expressing the other.

War experience, if anything, verified in individual experience the scientific theories of the philosophers. As Ford's heroine phrased it in speaking of the war years, "When you thought of time in those days your mind wavered impotently like eyes tired by reading too small print."[1] For the troops who had no over-all picture of their army's strategy, time meant those alternations between stretches of front-line duty and perhaps the endless shift of the seasons in a world that only a "blighty" or death could terminate. It was one of the new values that war imposed on its combatants, and it was one which was not easily forgotten once the war was over.

In the late fall of 1923 Ford Madox Ford began the war novel that was to run to four volumes and take as many years to write. His task was essentially that of the younger generation of writers who were experimenting with the new ideas

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1. Ford Madox Ford, A Man Could Stand Up, (1948), p. 29.

available after the war. But Ford was fifty, and if not a financially established novelist, he had at least produced enough literature to lay claim to writing as his profession. In 1914 he had published The Good Soldier, which amply demonstrated his technical ability as a novelist. Behind him at the time were five years of collaboration and dissidence with Conrad, his founding and editorship of The English Review, and a lifelong study and appreciation of the Continental stylists of the last century. And if, as a more considerate critic phrased it, The Good Soldier had been "the best French novel in the English language," for for all the attention it received it might as well have been written in a foreign tongue. The reason was not far to seek. It was also one that mirrored the deadly strife between an old order and a new, each struggling to eliminate the other. For Ford, or Hueffer as he was then, had transgressed the boundaries of Edwardian public moral standards and therefore had to reap the rewards of a studied avoidance by society. His behaviour had been no worse, really, than that of Wells, or Cannan, or a score of other prominent literary figures during the era, but by ill chance Ford's linen had been aired in public, and though sundry vices were common fare for the Edwardians, they had to be condemned outright when they were not discreetly practiced.

Poor Ford! He had bungled into a sordid law suit that made him appear an absolute cad. So, he was ignored. His involvement with Violet Hunt had not been an escape from an unsympathetic wife to the understanding literary figure, but simply an exchange of one shrew for another even more verbal one. She and her malicious tongue made Ford even more miserable than he had been before, and when his wife refused to divorce the hulking pre-Raphaelite, Violet was deprived of the thing she had most desired--respectability.[1]

Thus, when the war had offered an avenue of escape to the aging (47) Ford, he had jumped at it. In August, 1915, he took a commission in the Welsh Regiment and by the following July was in France with a line regiment. When the war had ended Ford emerged with a new name, free of the women who had plagued his pre-war existence. He began to write again and met the third woman in his life, Stella Bowen. It was with her that he found the opportunity to write his Tietjens novels, his interpretation of the flurried years between Edwardian England and Armistice Day.

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1. See Douglas Goldring, The Last Pre-Raphaelite, (1948), pp. 152-184, for an interesting account of these events.

The world as it culminated in the war, then, became a plot, and the story began to materialize. But how to handle what had proved an almost impossible subject for others? As he recorded in one of his many quasi-autobiographies, Ford decided to fall back on the device of a central consciousness for the narrative simply because "you cannot make the world your central character . . . for mankind in the bulk seems to lose the character of humanity and to become mere statistics."[1] His central observer, then, was to have in his existence those qualities which would best exemplify the transition that had taken place in society between 1912 and the end of the war, and he would also have to undergo sufficient strain to keep the reader interested in his observations of a crumbling world. To stand this he needed to be a character of some mental fortitude and composure, with the power above all else of cool observation in all sorts of crises--for Ford envisioned not only war, but domestic intrigue, playing against the man.

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1. Ford Madox Ford, It Was the Nightingale, (1934), p. 195.

> My own observation of active warfare had led me to a singular conclusion . . . [punctuation Ford's] What preyed most on the mind of the majority of not professionally military men who went through it was what was happening at home. Wounds, rain, fear, and other horrors are terrible but relatively simple matters; you either endure them or you do not. But you have no way by which, by taking thought, you may avoid them . . . But what is happening at home within the four walls, and the immediate little circle of the individual--that is the unceasing strain.[1]

The consciousness was not to be a hero, just enough of a man of action to see the front and do what he was told. His keen critical faculties would not only keep him from initiating any daring actions, but they would involve him in difficulties with his superiors. "He was to be aware that in all places where they managed things, from Whitehall down to brigade headquarters, a number of things would be badly managed." But this knowledge would not obsess him. He had to belong to what Ford termed the "ruling class," whom he distinguished as being "authoritative, cynical, instructed in the ways of mankind . . . sometimes even educated and not infrequently . . . capable of real, cold passions for some person or some cause."[2]

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1. Ibid., p. 196.

2. Ibid., p. 198.

In capturing the period, Ford was guided by his own experience and that of so many major novelists in the same period. What they had seemed to have in common--Wells, Bennett, Lawrence, Cannan, Galsworthy, and others--were marital difficulties that were a plague on their work. These difficulties were, in fact, symptomatic of the age. The war, causing among other things the emancipation of women, also acted to remove from sexual relationships that heavy curtain of prudery that Edwardian respectability had demanded. So Ford decided to employ a marital intrigue which would screw tighter and always tighter around the central observer. Ostensibly, this plot came to him from a particular story of a wealthy American who had married a "wrong 'un." The lady in question had been rather "free" both before and after her marriage, and finally had eloped with a ship's steward. The husband, unable to escape because his principles wouldn't allow him to divorce her, had committed suicide when he found she intended to return. Ford's central figure was to follow in this general sort of embroilment but wouldn't be allowed to kill himself. He was to live his predicament down and eventually be freed by the war.

With these fragments and with his own peculiar details of the places and times he was writing of, he began the first

novel of the saga. It was completed in the summer of the next year (1924).

August saw the death of Conrad, and as soon as Ford heard of this he began Joseph Conrad: A Personal Remembrance. Writing in his usual impressionistic style he "reproduced" their old interminable discussions on writing, evolving in the process a sort of prospectus for fiction which must have fairly well represented Ford's own feelings and intent at the time of writing. The questions involved had been an occasional subject before in his essays and reminiscences. A substantial part of Thus To Revisit, written in 1921, is an expression of just such theories. These two very "impressionistic" essays offer some insight into the problems of method and structure as they exist in the Tietjens novels. They are even more important because of Ford's role, in the words of H. G. Wells, as "the only uncle of the Gifted Young."[1] Though he received none of the intellectual idol worship that fell to Lawrence or Woolf or Joyce, Ford was a leader and an innovator with no insignificant role to play in the development of the modern novel.

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1. H. G. Wells, Boon, (1915), p. 133.

Conrad and Ford had both been steeped in the Nineteenth Century French writers--to the point of being able to quote long passages from Maupassant and Flaubert to each other during the long winter evenings of their collaboration. In these writers and in James they had felt the presence of new ideas of form, of a departure from the traditional and realistically limited patterns of strong situtations connected by flat narrative passages. What they found most satisfactory as a basis for construction was the desire to reproduce the "general effect" that life makes on mankind. Life doesn't present itself as a rattling narrative beginning at a hero's birth and progressing to his not very carefully machined but predestined glory; it comes to an observer in episodes which extend backwards and forwards, each coloring slightly the one before it, until a whole picture is formed. So, they had decided, a novel that reflects life as it should consists of a series of impressions such as life imposes on the mind. The principle of selection was to guide the writer in achieving his effect just as it guides the mind in forming an opinion.

What has come to be known in modern criticism as "justification" was of paramount importance for Conrad and

Ford. Percy Lubbock in The Craft of Fiction was equally as concerned with this point. He saw the whole process of writing a novel to be in the "continual forestalling and anticipating" which would "justify" the action. "Far more important than the immediate page is the page to come, still in the distance, on behalf of which this one is secretly working."[1] Both Ford and Conrad worked this into the very atmosphere of their stories until every situation in them was rendered inevitable. Digressions could only be seeming ones. That they felt was the art which concealed their art.

It was the rendering of an affair through particular, not necessarily connected, impressions creating the "one embroilment, one set of embarrassments, one human coil, one psychological progression," which led to the most important facet of their "new form." The "time-shift" as they conceived it was to replace flat narrative passages and further unite the action by weaving, within the consciousness of the narrator, suggestions of past strong situations. Ford's later addition to its flexibility was the adoption of "duplicate cerebrations," or more than one consciousness as narrator,

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1. Percy Lubbock, The Craft of Fiction, (1921), p. 234.

each manipulating the action in his or her mind. This, it may be added, is probably responsible for the tediousness that so many readers of his work have complained of; for Ford makes the reader work, and until one has become used to his methods he can be as confusing as Joyce. But certainly no view of modern life can be expected to be devoid of complexities. The pattern of existence, as Ford perceived it, not of birth, apogee, and death, but the woven symbolism in time, arrives strangely enough out of this device of the "time-shift" employed to produce for the reader the effect of life. Such a method was necessary to capture out of the episodic experience of the individual in the midst of war a pattern which reflected the changing mein of British society. Where others failed, Ford succeeded, and his method is in no small way responsible for his achievement.

In Thus To Revisit, written just before his war novels, Ford demonstrates the sort of control he had over form and what it meant to him. He felt it was something writers in his generation (Ford was an Edwardian who had sold his soul to the young) steered away from discussing. This was especially true of his "Eminent Novelist friends," excluding Conrad, of course. A typical Fordian passage in the reminiscence suggests a critical generalization which is of some importance

in considering the structure and achievement of his serious works. It is contained in a passage in the form of a dialogue:

Self. I suppose then, in the matter of form, you arrive at the Sonata.
E. N. Yes, that's it. What is the Sonata?
Self. Like this: you state your first subject (hero and heroine) in the key of the tonic. You then state your second subject (heroine or hero) in the key of the Dominant, if the first subject is in a major--or in the key of the relative major, if the first subject is in a minor key. You repeat all that, and that finishes the first part. Then comes what is called the working out or Free Fantasia . . .
E. N. Then there is some Freedom . . .
Self. In that you mix up themes A and B, embroider on them in any related or even unrelated keys and tempi. You introduce foreign matter if you like . . .
E. N. I see. The Tertium, what is it?
Self. You introduce foreign matter and generally have a good time. In the Restatement you restate, A emphatically in his or her key, and B, equally emphatically, but in the tonic key of A. That becomes the key of the whole Sonata: Opus 232 in E Flat Major! You might restate the foreign matter which you introduced in the Free Fantasia.
E. N. Ah!
Self. But that is irregular. And you may or may not have a coda, a short sweet passage of reminiscence--the children tumbling over the Newfoundland on the lawn.
E. N. Don't you mean the feeling of relief after the divorce?
Self. Of course, the coda should give a feeling of relief.
E. N. To think of you knowing all that. I thought you were only interested in golf.[1]

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1. Ford Madox Hueffer, Thus To Revisit: Some Reminiscences, (1921), pp. 45-46.

Of course one cannot take this in absolute seriousness. It is best considered in the light Ford intended for all his reminiscences--as an accurate impression, perhaps confused in its matter-of-factness, but nevertheless true as an impression. They are an aid to an analysis of the Tietjens novels for they open the way to a full appreciation of the novels' very important time-structure.

The plot of the work is relatively simple and quite "real" in that it seems to parallel a great deal of experience that only after forty years is being fully revealed. A biographical monograph of a poet of this time, Edward Thomas: The Last Four Years, by one of his intimates describes a relationship between Thomas, his wife, and his "good friend" that bears striking resemblances to the plight of Ford's hero.[1] Yet this is only one example. Aldington employed a similar denouement in his Death of a Hero, and as has been shown, "the other woman" seemed to have played a prominent part in Edwardian society.

In Ford's work Christopher Tietjens, the younger son of a Yorkshire squire, belongs to the old school of landed

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1. Eleanor Farjeon, Edward Thomas: The Last Four Years, (1958).

gentry and Toryism. He is intellectually arrogant--he amuses himself by discovering errors in the Encyclopedia Britannica--even contemptuous, yet he possesses immense kindliness and sentimentality. His rather awkward high-mindedness has caused him to marry a society beauty brought up in the bold new world of Edwardian London society. He believed he had compromised the young lady by kissing her on a train while returning from a week-end house party--a significant detail in that by the end of the trilogy Tietjens' view of propriety has been immensely changed. Sylvia had agreed to his proposal only because she thought herself pregnant from one of her affairs. After a child is born she becomes bored and leaves him. But that becomes even more tiring than "the hulking grey mass of intellect" and she decides to return. Christopher believes a gentleman would never divorce his wife, no matter what her behaviour, and when Sylvia writes demanding to be taken back, he agrees.

Some Do Not, the first novel of the trilogy, opens at this point, in the summer of 1912, while Christopher is arranging his wife's return from Germany. At a private gold club in Kent he rescues a young suffragette from two drunken members. Circumstance brings him and the girl together again and Christopher discovers that she is the daughter of

an old friend of his family. They are attracted to each other, but this "last Tory gentleman of the old school" cannot even consider such a balm for his predicament. As Sylvia says of him, "He's the soul of truth like a stiff Dutch doll. . . . I tell you he's so formal he can't do without all the conventions there are, and so truthful he can't use half of them." His wife hates his smugness and constantly tries to crack his superiority by circulating false stories about him. In fact she manages to make Tietjens the object of slander. There is a compromising but quite innocent accident while he is driving with the young suffragette, Valentine, early one morning, and Sylvia turns this into "proof" of the moral degeneration she wants so badly to force upon him. Then Ford shifts the narrative to an afternoon and evening in 1917. In the events of his last day in London, Christopher is once again thrown together with Valentine. He is to return to active duty in France after having taken convalescent leave for severe shell shock. His father's rather questionable death in the interim--it might have been suicide--seems to have been caused by the rumours spread about Christopher, and his "proper" refusal to defend himself in the face of the charges has further involved him. Valentine is really the only satisfying feature of his life.

Yet after asking her to become his mistress he can't carry through. At the close of the first novel he realizes that they are still "the sort that--do not!" Within these two major sections covering a weekend in 1912 and a day in 1917, Ford manages to convey the change in sensibility that was taking place in pre-war England and which was delayed for four years during the war yet made all the more inevitable.

The middle novel, No More Parades, concerns itself with a base camp for replacements in France. The whole of the action comprises two climactic days during which Sylvia arrives in the GHQ area to harass Christopher even while he is in the middle of the terrible fatigues which attend the war. Incident upon incident of misfortune occupies this masterful picture of the hostilities. Yet there is nothing harrowing about the battle seen from a base camp. It expresses the endless muddle and mud that war is, inflicting the patient minds of sufferers more than their bodies. Ford, here, achieves true greatness as a novelist, for the sensitivity to the suffering and an infinite sympathy with the characters evolve a sense of the sublime much as a classical tragedy does.

The failure to compromise his standards in any way causes Christopher at the close of the novel to be sent back to

the front, even though he is one of the best officers at the base camp and physically unfit for active service.

A Man Could Stand Up continues the description of the Western Front and rounds this sort of war experience out by having as a setting a relatively quiet morning's action in the trenches. But Armistice Day itself occupies most of the novel. Valentine, the young former suffragette, and Christopher manage to get together at last. Again Ford depends on his method to emphasize his points and method is very important in this most crucial of the Tietjens novels. By dealing in three different sections, first with Valentine alone, then Christopher in the trenches, and finally with the two of them together on the afternoon of Armistice Day as seen through the eyes of Valentine, Ford manages to convey just those changes that the war has effected in them. With the war at an end there is a new atmosphere where a man can stand up on a hill without fear, and the two people decide to find a hole to climb in together. Tietjens realizes in a noisy scene of celebration on which the novel closes:

> This then was the day! The war had made a man of him! It had coarsened and hardened him. There was no other way to look at it. It had made him reach a point where he would no longer stand unbearable things . . . . What he wanted he was prepared to take. What he had been before, God alone knew. A Younger Son? A Perpetual Second-in-Command? Who knew? But today the world was changed. Feudalism was finished; its last vestiges were gone. It held no place for him. He was going--he was damn well going--to make a place in it for . . . [1]

The whole of this development is easy to grasp. It is what one might expect of a writer of normal sensitivity and English upper middle class background who had gone through the war--but not often what one got. What gives the saga force, however, and lifts the somewhat typed central figures into a whirling life of their own, is method. Method is practically everything in these novels. It links them to the point of making them seem completely interdependent, yet allows each an individual structure as complete as that of the whole trilogy. It makes the action felt by the reader rather than dispassionately observed.

Ford created minds in the process of the strain that is living. They go through crucial instants in their lives, and as they grasp at the world around them the past is forever bobbing up in the form of other instants which are background

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1. Ford Madox Ford, A Man Could Stand Up, (1948), p. 200.

for the comprehension of their reactions to the instant they are living. The physical events in which the characters are involved during the narrative take place in six short spaces of time over a period beginning in the spring of 1912 and coming to a close on Armistice Day, 1918. In order to arrive at a working definition of these "instants," as they might be called, one need only apply Bertrand Russell's meaning of the space-time term to the level of social inter-relations. Each "instant," then, is a group of events, all belonging to a man's experience, which have the following properties: any two of the events overlap, and no event outside the group overlaps with every member of the group. An event in such a scheme will be any meeting between two or more individuals and/or things which leave an impression with the particular parties involved, rather than simply occupying a small amount of space-time. A series of these events taking place in a given period of time may create a situation of impact, an "instant," at once vivid and meaningful to the minds involved in terms of the life around them. And these in turn will make up the

whole of an individual's conscious life.[1]

The three novels are comprised of six such "instants" among a group of characters and built around the main figure of Tietjens. To pursue the analogy of the Sonata, Some Do Not opens with a consideration of the main character, Tietjens, and this scene serves to suggest the background of his marital difficulties up to that present moment as well as to define his character. First Tietjens and then his companion, Macmaster, are the points of view for the narrative which opens the novel. The shift between them is very subtle. It is woven around a dialogue of the previous morning seemingly remembered by Tietjens, which ends with a return to their present situation. "In the train, from beneath his pile of polished dressing and dispatch cases--Tietjens had thrown his immense kit-bag with his own hands into the guard's van--Macmaster looked across at his friend." An external view of the "last Tory" under duress is then presented by his sympathetic friend.

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1. Proust also capitalized on such a projection of modern existence, and the two writers have much in common for they both depend on method as much as on subject matter to exhibit their ideas. Recherche de Temps Perdus was published in 1922, a year after Ford's comments on methods in Thus To Revisit and a year before he began the Tietjens saga; it seems likely that both arrived independently at a somewhat similar approach to writing, thus exhibiting the significance of the zeitgeist in the Twentieth Century.

Taking advantage of the first chapter division, Ford shifts the scene to Sylvia, in Germany with her mother. Focusing on the evening of the same day of the previous action--in the manner of Flaubert--he sketches a quick background for the scene between mother, daughter, and the Irish priest who is their spiritual advisor. The ensuing dialogue is presented in that omniscient tone that is also so characteristic of the French stylist. In effect, it is a hint of things to come. It sets Sylvia's vituperative frame of mind toward Tietjens as the "key of the Dominant" in the story. After this omniscient aside on the part of Ford, the action concerns itself again with the three days before Tietjens hears from his wife. Time vacillates with the characters themselves. After a dramatically created meeting between Tietjens and his friend, obviously some while after the events of the opening chapter, "Macmaster sat down again and deliberately began to review the events of the day. It had begun with disaster and in disaster it had continued." Gradually, what has taken place is revealed from his point of view. Then Tietjens becomes the consciousness reflecting on the events of the day, and his narrative-in-thought leads up to the already delineated meeting with his companion that opened the third chapter. Valentine is introduced, along with a host of minor

characters who belong to the age, and the three days are traced in and out of the consciousness of Valentine, Macmaster, and Tietjens until they are a fully rounded reality for the reader. Plot seems to remain in the background, along with intent; actually the basis of Tietjens' dilemma has been founded and the long series of events which move him toward the final resolution of the third novel already have produced an intensity which will build inevitabilities as the story progresses.

Some Do Not is divided into two parts. A time-shift places the second section in the third year of the war during the last afternoon of Tietjen's convalescent leave from the front. As carefully as the first part of the novel has recreated the events leading to the involvement of Valentine and Christopher, the second unfolds the details of intervening years. Every remembered event on the part of the four consciousnesses used in the narration--that of Sylvia, Valentine, Tietjens' elder brother, and Christopher himself--carries forward the necessity of the decision that ". . . we're the sort that--do not!" The afternoon itself, during the shifting between past and present, becomes an instant which displays Christopher's perseverance to his code when the very world is crumbling beneath him. Yet Ford is able, in spite of this "pointing," to bring Valentine, Mark, Christopher, and

Sylvia to life. They suffer and exist as real individuals caught in the psychology of their own problems as well as in the reflection of their age.

It is only at the close of the novel, when one has in mind the total perspective of the subject Ford offers, that the narrative seems to have blended into a reasonably continuous chronological reality. The selectivity he employs within a relative time structure has been intermingled in past and present until each event recorded is neither more nor less than a part of the final "instant" involving Valentine and Christopher on the eve of his return to the front. To strengthen this impression the last chapter of the novel is a recapitulation, a coda of sorts, in which Christopher relives his parting with the girl and argues his reasons for not seducing her. For a background the friends of Christopher appear in his remembrance of the last few hours as a reflection of the shifting morality to which he has not succumbed. The novel ends suspended in Christopher's memory as he waits for the morning and his return to active duty.

In the dedicatory letter prefacing No More Parades Ford attempts to delimit the historical aspect of this second

novel in the trilogy, vouching for such events as are treated in it.

> There was in France, at the time covered by this novel, an immense base camp, unbelievably crowded with men whom we were engaged in getting up the line, working sometimes day and night in the effort. That immense army was also extremely depressed by the idea that those who controlled it overseas would--I will not use the word betray, since that implies volition--but "let us down." We were oppressed, ordered, counter-ordered, commanded, countermanded, harassed, strafed, denounced--and above all, dreadfully worried.

Out of this, two days of war are made to come alive. One central observer, Christopher, is employed throughout. And the dual levels of time which run throughout the trilogy are here the most obvious. A collective past exists for the observer and threads itself in and out of his concern for the present moment. The oppressing necessities of army life at a base camp become a never quite adequate escape from this second time element represented by the imagined and recalled past. When Sylvia appears at the base camp this other time becomes a physical reality for Christopher, and its discomforts must be dealt with beside the deadening 24-hour-a-day routine of the war. Past and present seem to dissolve into each other. The action of the first novel is both echoed and used as explanatory background in No More Parades. In this way every moment is created with the condensation of earlier history behind it, and the past is not separate and complete but an ever-developing part

of a changing present. Christopher is caught in this vice of time. Pomp and circumstances, parades dissolve under it, and in the two days of the novel Christopher's own Toryish sort of parade coupled with Sylvia's malignity suffer him to pay for honour and sense of duty with the lost of his superiors' trust. At the end of the novel he knows there will be no place for his particular moral code when the war is over.

The final volume of the original trilogy has a sharp historical focus--the armistice, the moment that is the funeral wake of the old order, the end of all parades. Valentine opens the narrative on the armistice morning and her state of mind occupies about a third of the work. Ford then goes on to a passage describing a few short hours at the front in the last year of the war. Tietjens, in the second section of the novel, is pursued by his past and at the same time involved in "not too active active duty" in the trenches, the latter occupying most of his thought. This restatement of Tietjens in the war points up the similarity of thought between him and Valentine. The two parts are a sort of counterpointing, each composed within a separate physical world on a distinct personality, yet harmonious in relationship to each other. They build up to the magnificent

closing section of A Man Could Stand Up and of the trilogy itself. The world was changed and Tietjens along with it. At a wild Armistice Day party Valentine and Christopher set out together into life under a new standard. This is the final "instant," the moment when all the events of the past seven years, each carefully overlapping at least one other in the narrative, produce the relationship on which the novel ends.

The existence of a fourth novel which continues the Tietjens story may seem to endanger any suggestion that the trilogy is complete in itself. But Last Post, after all, is only a further argument for the worth of the time-shifting device as a unifying force of the novels. For just as constant reference to the past as a force in the present moment enables the trilogy novels to be linked by cross-references in the six "instants" described, so Last Post is woven into existence as a continuation of the Tietjens of the first three novels. But the pattern is not there. Only does he go on for Ford, "jogging along with the ups and downs and plenty of worries and some satisfaction, the Tory Englishman, running his head perhaps against fewer walls, perhaps against more, until I myself cease from those pursuits."[1]

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1. Ford Madox Ford, Last Post, (1948), Introductory Letter.

It has been argued that the most lasting effect Ford Madox Ford has had on literature has come from his patient concern for the younger writers and poets he knew and helped in the twenty years around the First World War. Ezra Pound, Norman Douglas, Ernest Hemingway, D. H. Lawrence, Sherwood Anderson, and Wyndham Lewis are but a few of the neophytes of the age who listened to his accurate divinations and analyses--and learned. Sir Compton Mackenzie has summed this feeling up in Literature in My Time:

> When I consider the critical minds with which I have come into contact I find that I have no hesitation in declaring that of the many judgements I have listened to on literature, the least fallible of all were Ford Madox Ford's . . . for I do not believe that any man was so well aware as he of the transformation that literature was undergoing.[1]

Yet it was his war novels that displayed not only literature's transformation, but that of society as well. For Ford had succeeded in describing the war period in as effective a manner as ever Galsworthy had drawn Victorian society in A Man of Property. And though Ford stated in one of his prefaces to the novels that his intention was to show what war had done in order that it wouldn't happen again,

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1. Compton Mackenzie, Literature in My Time, (1933), p. 183.

the artist in him had won out, so that one need not be disquieted by disguised rants and insensitive propagandist arguments in the work. One of his purposes was to show "what the late war was like." This, he did, but without overstating its horrors or its heroisms. The result is pure literature, magnificently sensitive prose.

R. H. Mottram, like Ford, had seen in the war itself an entity to be described. He, too, depended on his own immediate experiences for a vision of that entity, but where Ford had meticulously sifted his fiction through history and so revealed his "patterns in the carpet," Mottram went straight to the events themselves and employed them in chronicle-like manner.

His war service, in fact, ideally fitted him for the approach he was to employ. As a Norwich bank clerk, Mottram's only connection with literature before the war had been a friendship with John and Ada Galsworthy. But he was not lacking in literary sensitivity, and when he was swept up into the war the groundwork for a career in literature had already been laid. It is fairly safe to say that his actual war experience followed pretty closely that of the two main male figures in The Spanish Farm Trilogy. In fact, the second novel of the work

he admitted having taken from his war diary.[1] When he was discharged he returned to his bank job, only to discover "how completely the pre-War world had been blown away, and how specious was the pretence that we had come back to anything recognizable."[2] During the long delays between campaigns he had begun to write and had found it amazingly easy.

> The War moved me very little to poetry, and it was in the hospital at Hazelbrouck in 1916 that I turned to prose. I felt already then that the romance and heroics usually woven around war were as futile as the hysterics and black despair about it which, even then audible, became vociferous thirteen years later. Experience of the actual front line trenches, and an extraordinary run of luck in being called out to administrative jobs convinced me then of its portentous silliness and ineffectiveness and subversion.[3]

In 1919 he had rewritten his "diary" into a sort of "chronicle" and tried unsuccessfully to publish it. Even the backing of John Galsworthy was not enough to get the work accepted. Another novel, Our Mrs. Dormer, followed--and also went unpublished. In October, 1922, Mottram began his "last" novel before he gave up writing for insurance. Curiously

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1. R. H. Mottram, "How The Spanish Farm Came To Be Written," in Gilbert H. Fabes, The First Editions of Ralph Hale Mottram, (1934).

2. Ibid., p. 33.

3. Ibid., p. 32.

enough, his basis for the work was similar to that Ford had employed in No More Parades. He wrote of it:

> No "soldier" nowadays "fights" for many hours out of the whole length of any campaign, and most barrack and camp life is strikingly like that in a well-run reformatory, without the definite prospect of release. There were hundreds of Spanish Farms, several of them actually called Ferme l'Espagnol in the areas longest and most thickly occupied in the British armies. . . . Skene and Madeline, composite figures made up of the hundreds of types I soldiered or billeted with all those years, became almost national to me.[1]

The result couldn't have been more different from that of Ford, yet it arose from similar intentions and resulted in as unique a method. For as Galsworthy was quick to note, The Spanish Farm seemed neither novel nor chronicle, but an odd combination of the two. Mood and subject had guided Mottram in a new direction, toward what Galsworthy could describe only as "highly humanized history."[2]

Because of its style The Spanish Farm was more than this. It was yet another step in the development of one segment of the Modern Novel. By 1930 such an approach had become a common thing in the reminiscences and disguised autobiographies and novels written about the war. Here, then, was "time in the novel" asserting itself in yet another way. From the sort of contemporaneity

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1. Ibid., pp. 35-36.

2. John Galsworthy, "Preface" to R. H. Mottram's The Spanish Farm, (1924).

that had characterized Tono-Bungay and Clayhanger, one segment of the Modern Novel had evolved toward the "humanized history" of writers like Mottram. In the 1930's it was to be carried to its logical conclusion in the work of Christopher Isherwood. His "I am a camera with its shutter open, quite passive, recording, not thinking," was a statement of his intention to reflect history--in this case to reflect pre-Hitler Berlin in the process of change--as it took place, in as unbiased a manner as was possible.[1] In doing this he was simply developing the approach Mottram had so successfully employed with his war novels.

The Spanish Farm developed quite naturally out of Mottram's pre-occupation with his war experience. He was after typical, not imaginary, characters, and his memories provided him with these. The Ferme l'Espagnol itself was typical, and the characters who gradually came to revolve around it must have had as much reality as could be asked for. Gilbert Fabes has recorded one effect of the novel on Mottram's fellow soldiers:

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1. Christopher Isherwood, Goodbye to Berlin, (1945).

> It is a remarkable fact that even now, ten years after the publication of The Spanish Farm, Mr. Mottram still receives letters from ex-soldiers of all ranks and nationalities, including German, saying that the trilogy and the other war books are favored because they give a correct representation of the war as remembered by them.[1]

The novel begins somewhat obscurely because of Mottram's efforts to establish this universality of experience. The central figure of the narrative, Madeline, is used as the consciousness experiencing the action, but the novel opens with a depiction of the Spanish Farm as a common experience of the B. E. F.

> English officers and men who billeted in the Spanish Farm (and practically the whole English army must have passed through or near it one time or another) to this day speak of it as one of the few places they can still distinguish in the blur of receding memories, one of the few spots of which they have nothing but good to tell.[2]

With this established, however, Mottram then settles down to the task of creating Madeline, the finest representation of a French provincial ever done by a British author. Indeed, she is good enough to have come out of the work of Flaubert or Balzac. She evolves from the young daughter of a Flemish

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1. Fabes, The First Editions of Ralph Hale Mottram, p. 25.
2. Mottram, The Spanish Farm, p. 13.

farmer into a shrewd woman capable of dealing with anything the war brings.

The action begins chronologically just after the failure at Loos, and opens with the appearance of two "New Army" subalterns who have come to join the battalion that is currently billeted there. From this meeting of Lieutenant Skene with Madeline Vanderlynden in December, 1915, Mottram starts to unfold not only the main plot which is so inextricably bound up with the progress of the war, but the rather sensitive relationship that is represented by the Entente Cordiale--for it is no strong cultural bond that has thrown the two nationalities together, and Mottram is almost too aware of this.

Madeline, with her nobleman lover and an aging father to look after, embodies all those qualities that a foreigner identifies with French petite bourgeois. In spite of the frivolity of her French lover's sudden dash into war, she holds to her idea of getting him back. Yet her clandestine love affair does not by any means dominate her life. Her primary concern is seeing that she and her father get their due from the billeted troops; and one has the impression at the end of the trilogy that regardless of the wreckage of the war, Madeline has done just that, perhaps even has turned a handsome profit out of the business. Madeline, like the

Spanish Farm, is something permanent. She is almost an institution, and though the war may "chip" her as it did the shot tower of the old farm, the effect is of as little importance.

Compared with her, the middle-aged architect from the east of England is like a straw in the wind. What roots he has are withered during his four years of active service. The war seems to have severed him from his civilian existence so his life is completely transferred into the realm of military and war morality. He is alone, and his relationship with Madeline and the Spanish Farm is that of an interloper. In her affair with him, she accepts him only as a substitute for the selfish Georges whom she cannot find. Throughout the first novel Lieutenant Skene is depicted as a convenience for Madeline in her moments of trial. In Paris she agrees to a week with him for the same reason that she had accepted his love for a day in Amiens--because she is piqued by not discovering Georges. Skene, on the other hand, finds in her the only solace and the only escape from war. Yet while he has nothing else, she retains always her ties with the farm.

The affair occupies very little of The Spanish Farm, however. The progress of the war and Madeline's fate in it

take up most of the action. The farm rests on the edge of the battle zone in Flanders and is used first as a rest center for the troops, then as part of a division GHQ that is preparing for an offensive. Finally it becomes, after the German spring offensive in 1918, a part of the line itself. The effects of the war on Madeline and her father are gradual ones. They have already made the sudden first adjustment to war before the book opens. One of Madeline's brothers has been killed and the other is a German prisoner.

Through the long year of 1916 they go on farming as best they can, until Madeline's elder sister is driven back from her husband's farm by a German offensive and comes back to the Spanish Farm. Madeline, as the younger daughter, inevitably has to give way to her sister so she establishes a restaurant in the village near the farm. From there it is but a short step to office work in Amiens and thence to Paris. Georges is constantly on her mind; it's because of him that she drifts from the farm to the city. When she finally does discover him she forgets about Skene but is not ashamed to ask for money from the Englishman. Her interlude of happiness is short, however. Georges rushes from his convalescent leave into the "great offensive in Champagne" and is killed. Madeline returns to the farm to

find her services needed again. She hardens to the task of running the billeting and house management, and from this moment rejects the men--they have caused all the foolishness and killing. It's all their fault, so she has only contempt for them.

In the spring offensive of 1918 the farm is all but over-run. Old Jerome Vanderlynden wanders into the German lines and disappears. The farm is occupied as a reserve line; in spite of this Madeline stays on to protect the property. With the summer the slow British advance is begun and she is left to shift for herself. Jerome appears one day in the autumn, but has been shocked into senility and is unable to relate any of his experiences. In a sense, his ghost has been laid by the war. It remains only for Madeline to do the same with hers and she can forget this stupidity--save for the money it brings in for reparations. She makes a last visit to the hunting lodge where she used to meet her lover and finds it desolated by the troops. Lieutenant Skene passes by on his way back home. She discovers that she did not even want this "lesser man" of hers, "had never wanted him, nor any Englishman, nor anything English. He was just one of the things the War, the cursed War had brought on her, and now it, and they,

were going. Good riddance."[1] She alone remained.

> For she was the Spanish Farm, the implacable spirit of that border land so often fought over, never really conquered. She was that spirit that forgets nothing, but maintains itself, amid all disasters, and necessarily. For she was perhaps the most concrete expression of humanity's instinctive survival in spite of its own perversity and ignorance. There must she stand, slow-burning revenge incarnate, until a better, gentler time.[2]

Sixty-Four, Ninety-Four hadn't begun as an integral part of The Spanish Farm. It was, in reality, the hitherto unpublished "chronicle" reworked and judiciously edited with the help of Galsworthy. Yet it blended perfectly with the other work, complemented it, as it were. This second book, published in 1925, considered the same period of time, and occasionally the same events as had The Spanish Farm, but it told the story from Lieutenant Skene's point of view. In a sense Mottram had employed Bennett's method in the Clayhanger trilogy. And to this he was later to add Galsworthy's contribution to the form: a series of short portraits, poetic in mood, to link the three novels.

The novel takes its name from the doggeral soldiers adapted to fit the notes of "Sick Call":

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1. Mottram, The Spanish Farm, p. 233.
2. Ibid., p. 234.

Sixty-four, ninety-four--
He'll never go sick no more,
The poor beggar's dead.

In these three lines is everything the novel expresses. There is a feeling of irretrievable loss, a quiet bitterness about them that every trench soldier has experienced. They are the irony that was a part of the life, and out of them rises the sense of comradeship. Sixty-Four, Ninety-Four concerns itself with these things, finds them out in the "humanized history" of the events. Of course, Mottram was neither the first nor the last to explore these sentiments. His work rises above the other fiction concerned with these same things because Sixty-Four, Ninety-Four stands as only part of a much larger panorama that is the whole trilogy.

The story is of an officer's experience first as an infantry subaltern and later as a staff officer. Enlisted men hardly figure in the story. Lieutenant Skene is a man who stands alone, and as the war wears on, his isolation is increased. Yet because he does seem "typical," as Mottram intended, and wholly real, the thirtyish architect gives an added weight to the trilogy. He is, as has been suggested, balanced against Madeline in the war, and although it is Madeline's home that is being fought over, it is he who loses the most in the struggle. From an intense young subaltern anxious to "get into the scrap" before it ends, he becomes a

sly "old soldier" who, by the close of the war, can identify himself with nothing but army life in France. After the first few months of the Somme campaign his regiment is a mere ghost of the one he had begun his service with. In England the death of his uncle leaves him as bereft of associates, and the war-time society that has sprung up is completely alien to him. So his one wish is to remain in France where he half imagines he is "wanted" by Madeline.

Their affair, as seen in the two novels, is a melancholy interlude between spells of trench warfare for Skene. Madeline could never let it be more, and Skene can never forget that he must return to the line. When they form their liaison they consciously fall into a sort of make-believe to forget the abnormalities of the war.

> For in their secret hearts both of them were domesticated, conventional to the core. Both of them loathed the War and all it had brought. It was the queerest of contradictions that forced them to comfort their ultra-respectable aspirations in such a place and such a manner, both spoken of even in war-time, by many people, as "irregular."[1]

Skene goes through the average experiences of a subaltern. He shares the high hopes of the army before the Somme, and then is blown up. He convalesces and the inevitable depression

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1. Ibid., p. 143.

sets in when he returns to the bleakness of the front.

> He was not right yet. At sunset especially, he was fearfully sorry for himself. This was a symptom indeed that became chronic with Infantry Officers as the War reached what proved to be the half of its course. It was so obvious that one had only to go up to the Line often enough and death was certain.[1]

Then Mottram introduces one of the most unforgettable figures that war literature has produced, in "Uncle" Dakar, the Canadian staff officer who takes Skene under his wing. If there is anything positive in the war for Skene it grows out of his friendship with the equally rootless, sixty-year-old colonial who epitomizes the war-time morality that developed among the soldiers, and replaced that which they had left behind them. For unlike regulars, the civilian soldiers could not discover a satisfying morality in military discipline. They accordingly developed their own. Mottram is at his best in cataloguing them and explaining their existence for respectable men like Skene.

> Just when it became impossible for him to feel any longer that it was <u>his</u> war, to be won by his own individual sacrifice, it became possible to feel that he need not sacrifice himself either immediately or continuously. Having so narrowly escaped death, he might now live a bit and not bother. . . . Uncle was the finest possible tutor for a young man anxious to live. He taught the three arts of war so much more necessary than musketry, field engineering, or tactics. Or were they, perhaps, part of tactics? Wangling, Scrounging, and Winning.[2]

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1. <u>Ibid.</u>, p. 387.

2. <u>Ibid.</u>, p. 443.

As it is defined in the novel, Wangling was the art of obtaining one's just due by unfair means. And this was by no means confined to the troops in the field. Avoiding "red tape" became a time-honored procedure as the war went on: "the contracts for supplying steel helmets to Americans, the Command of smaller Allied Armies, the very sovereignty of nations all became subject to the Wangle, so remote had become the chances of justly obtaining bare justice." Scrounging meant "obtaining what one had not a shadow of a claim to by unfair means." Winning did not rest in necessity, and because of that was considered the true art of the old soldier. It was simply stealing, or the "Art of obtaining that which one has no right to, for the sake of obtaining it, for the joy of possession."[1] Small wonder that Victorian ethics were scorned after the war!

The war hardens Skene and gives to him the comradeship of Uncle, but it takes much more from him. When it is suddenly at an end, he is lost. Around him he hears talk of emigration to the colonies. As a friend says, "It's where you're still let alone."[2] For these men take for granted that the England

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1. Ibid., pp. 444-46

2. Ibid., p. 542.

they knew is gone. The good times they remember of the army seem to be lost in the remembrance of men like Uncle who died with the war. But Mottram is more clear-sighted than to sentimentalize this emptiness, and he closes Sixty-Four, Ninety-Four with the note too many writers have refused to recognize:

> He had gone into the thing neither because he was paid, nor because he was forced--and that was something. Processions and speeches were empty show--even the eventual effect on Europe was irrelevant--but deep within himself he had fulfilled a need, worked out a destiny. In what an abyss of self-contempt would he now be sunk had he not gone to that War--he, fit and of age? That was it--the call had come, and he had answered; surely he had his reward in: "I was there!"[1]

The Crime at Vanderlynden's is the serious farce, the comic relief of the trilogy. It is an analysis of war built around a very minor incident at the Spanish Farm that symbolizes the whole paradox of the war. The crime is against all those on whose land the war was fought, and the criminal is every soldier. What Mottram attempts is to capture in a minor altercation over a French civilian claim for damages, all the nuances of the Entente Cordiale and of the war behind the lines.

The Vanderlyndens had made a statement of damages caused by a soldier who billeted there. The French prefect had in turn been insulted by the same troops--they had laughed at his tri-color sash--as they returned wearily to the lines to cope

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1. Ibid., p. 554.

with a counter-attack. In the endless cross-filing of complaints that this had brought about, a divisional staff officer is assigned to the case because he speaks Flemish French. He discovers that the crime at Vanderlynden's is a burden he cannot escape. For the anonymous soldier who tore up the small corner set aside for prayer and quartered his mules in it is almost a myth. During the last three years of the war the staff officer is sent intermittently to follow down clues as to his identity, but never really comes close to discovering him or his real name.

Again Mottram has traced the gradual progress of the mood of the soldiers across the war years. He has captured the psychological intangibles that arose from the conflict. In a very moving end to the trilogy his staff officer crystallizes the emotions of the returning British soldier. They are, as well, a final comment on the chronicle of four years.

> The crime at Vanderlynden's showed the whole thing in miniature. The English had been welcomed as Allies, resented as intruders, but never had become homogeneous with the soil and its natives, nor could they ever leave any lasting mark on the body or spirit of the place. They were still incomprehensible to Vanderlynden's, and Vanderlynden's to them. . . . To him /the staff officer/, at that moment, it seemed that the English Effort was fading out, leaving nothing but graveyards. . . ./But/ the crime at Vanderlynden's was behind him. He had got away from it at last.[1]

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1. Ibid., pp. 785-86.

It was suggested at the beginning of this chapter that The Spanish Farm Trilogy was one of the few novels of the war which deserves to be ranked with the best literature of its era. This is so for several reasons. The author's sensitivity to time and character is perfect in the trilogy; no finer heroine than Madeline has been created in First War fiction. Its unique method, its very interesting organization into a trilogy, are both aesthetically satisfying; as an innovation and a step forward in the expanding form of the novel both were in close agreement with the major trend of the trilogy's era--that of experimentation. Yet what most clearly distinguishes The Spanish Farm Trilogy from its contemporary counterparts, what sets it above them, is Mottram's vision of the war. He describes it as it was. His trilogy is "true" to its subject. It has the ring of truth that one associates with The Dynasts or War and Peace, and this alone was a unique achievement in the 1920's, especially among the war novels that were written then. The war had done too much to its literary servants, was still too fresh in their minds, for them to treat it coolly. It may be argued that sensitivity is a far more important gauge of a novel's quality than the writer's attitude to his subject, but in war fiction sensitivity often "wallowed" in the hysteria of horror, solely to convey the writer's

message and not simply because the descriptions were true. Mottram did not go to this extreme. Nor did he attempt to justify the conflict. His work is at once a monument to the war and its dead, and a record of its cost.

Neither Ford nor Mottram had attempted to write a tragedy about the war. A sense of darkness broods over passages of their work, as it does over almost every written comment on the war. But Tragedy? They had described the tragedy that war is, but they certainly hadn't tried to delineate the conflict within the confines of the fictional form of Tragedy. It was for others to do this. Barbusse had shown the way as early as 1917. It only remained for British writers to develop the theme for themselves--which, of course, they did.

A. P. Herbert's The Secret Battle (1919) was among the first novels of this genre to appear, and it was followed by a holocaust of others. C. E. Montague's non-fictional analysis, Disenchantment (1922) delineated the possibilities of such an approach and the heights to which it could rise in prose. His two novels (Rough Justice and Right Off the Map), however, did not fulfill the potentialities of his non-fiction. Richard Aldington's Death of a Hero was a deliberate attempt to create a modern tragedy out of a war novel. But again it was not quite successful.

In 1929 "Private 19022" published Her Privates We. Immediately Arnold Bennett, E. M. Forster, St. John Irving, and T. E. Lawrence all acclaimed it as a great book. The last named, as well, at once recognized in it the hand of the author of Scenes and Portraits. But Frederick Manning was little known as a writer, and it was only after his death in 1935 that his authorship of Her Privates We was revealed. He had preferred anonymity to emphasize his concern with the anonymous ranks.

Manning was an Australian by birth but spent practically all of his adult life in Europe and England. He suffered seriously from asthma and was in constant ill health. Only an almost superhuman determination enabled him to last out the Flanders, Artois, and Picardy campaigns of the war. His health was even more damaged by them, and until his death he lived in almost total isolation, constantly ill, and able to write only intermittently. His earliest work, Scenes and Portraits (1909), had earned him the respect and friendship of several prominent writers and intellectuals whom he met through his publisher, Peter Davies. Yet he was almost a dilletante in his writing for he was fastidious to the point of seldom completing what he had begun. The work he did publish

was always letter-perfect, however.[1] At Peter Davies' request Manning had in the late twenties put aside a historical novel that had occupied him for years and had written--at an extraordinary speed for him--Her Privates We. A privately printed edition of the novel, in two volumes, under the title The Middle Parts of Fortune was struck in 1929. These went to his special friends, and to acquaintances of Davies. Then, with a few omissions and the removal of the obscenities, the novel was published as one volume for mass circulation.

Her Privates We is tragedy in the classical sense of the word. At the same time, however, it represents the private soldier's life "in the round." And it is an honest portrayal. The irony of the novel is not in the reader's general foreknowledge of trench life, but in his realization of the fate it holds for the private soldier. In filling out its action the novel uses all those characteristics of men in war that had first been introduced by Barbusse. Comradeship and courage take their place beside the individual's ultimate isolation and his fear. Boredom and horrible stress, cynicism and hope,

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1. T. E. Lawrence's acquaintance with Manning's work dated from an early review of Scenes and Portraits which he read in the Times Literary Supplement. He wrote to Sir William Rothenstein, "I was an older reader of Manning than you thought. A review in the Times Literary Supplement sent me to try Scenes and Portraits--it said, 'while we have Mr. Manning to write prose for us there is no need to despair of English style!' Quoted in Sir William Rothenstein's Since Fifty, (1939), p. 83.

petty ambition and complete unselfishness--all the paradoxes of trench warfare are depicted. But over and above these things is the insistent echo of fate. Throughout the novel the foredestined fate of the hero, Bourne--death in action--is sounded in the deaths of those around him. The irony is like that of Sophocles, for Bourne can't admit to himself that the war will kill him too. When he sees a man blown up beside him, he forces himself to avoid the inevitable conclusion.

> One forgets quickly. The mind is averted as well as the eyes. It reassures itself after that first despairing cry: "It is I!" "No, it is not I. I shall not be like that." And one moves on, leaving the mauled and bloody thing behind: gambling, in fact, on that implicit assurance each one of us has of his own immortality.[1]

The novel is filled with unfounded optimisms and their immediate contradiction by fate. Bourne is inextricably caught up in "the sausage machine," as the Western Front came to be known to infantry men after the Somme campaign. The means of escape open to him he rejects, partly out of pride and partly because of a sense of comradeship with the men he would have to leave. When he does finally agree to become an officer and so gain a brief respite from the front, it is

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1. "Private 19022," pseud., (F. Manning), Her Privates We, (1930), p. 20.

already too late. When his orders come through he is on the line again, and the last revolution of the wheel has begun.

Out of this Manning develops and then explores the strange mysticism that arises from so constant an association with death. Her Privates We is not unlike Walpole's The Dark Forest in this respect. As Manning described it:

> Life was a hazard, enveloped in mystery, and war quickened the sense of both in men: the soldier also, as well as the saint, might write his tractate de contemptu mundi, and differ from him only in the angle and spirit from which he surveyed the same bleak reality.[1]

Manning gives Bourne heroic stature by setting him apart from the other soldiers. He is a gentleman ranker of sorts--that is, he has money and intelligence. Yet he at first refuses a commission and prefers to serve with the common soldier. His past is a mystery to his comrades and remains so to the reader, but he becomes almost a legendary figure for them because of his extraordinary talents in "scrounging" a comfortable existence out of the lot of the private soldier. He is a noble one because he shares the danger of war with his comrades as well as the material largess that comes from

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1. Ibid., p. 137.

friends in England with money to spend.[1] In the two months which the book covers he is constantly "treating his mates out of his own pocket." He stands aloof from them, in spite of being one of them, one of the anonymous, inarticulate ranks who are the instruments of war.

Because of this the novel has been criticized as not being as accurate a portrayal of the private soldier's experience as Manning's pseudonym and preface would seem to suggest. The argument runs that "a man of letters does not become a private soldier by the simple step of enlisting, nor can he do it in any other way."[2] He must remain throughout, so the argument goes, an educated and imaginative man experiencing his own sensations and not those of the uneducated and unimaginative. There are two fallacies in such a criticism of Her Privates We. First, although Manning says in the preface that "my concern has been mainly with the anonymous ranks, whose opinion . . . I have tried to represent faithfully," it should not be inferred that the main purpose of the novel was to speak for the private soldier, the "Great Inarticulate."

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1. This theme is established as early as Chapter III of the novel. In it a sergeant relates to a few soldiers the tale of a mock-heroic drinking bout in which Bourne proves himself a giant among men.

2. A. C. Ward, The Nineteen-Twenties, (1930), p. 164.

Secondly, it is possible to portray very accurately these common men under the stress of battle. A literary man sharing their experience may not see things from their point of view, but if he is an acute observer--as Manning certainly was--he can describe the men in a manner that will reveal their thoughts, or at least reflect them in their moments of stress. Manning is one of the few British war novelists who succeeded at this.[1] He had intended to write a novel, however, not a loosely-connected narrative to serve as a skeleton on which to hang vivid descriptions.

The action covers two or more months during the latter half of 1916. It begins with the withdrawal of the regiment from assault positions on the Somme and ends, after an interlude in reserve, with the refitted outfit back in the line. Each of the twenty-eight chapters represents a different stage in Bourne's short trip from hope of life

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1. The Middle Parts of Fortune comes nearer to reality in this respect by virtue of the obscenities which are included, and which were so much a part of the common soldier's mode of expression. It may be added that those who wish a complete picture of the "Great Inarticulate," should not neglect John Brophy's and Eric Partridge's collection, Songs and Slang of the British Soldier: 1914-1918, (1931).

to loss of it.[1] To have survived when there were only a hundred or so left out of his original battalion seemed the height of fortune. Yet he goes from that to other heights, first to a "safe" job in the orderly room, which he ultimately rejects, and then to the prospect of officer-candidate's school in England, which he with some reluctance agrees to accept. As his unit returns to the line and his comrades are wounded or killed in an attack, the interval away from the front that this training would necessitate becomes more and more attractive. Then, with the order to return to Division GHQ in his pocket, he is picked--because he is to be an officer--to take part in a fatal raid. The novel closes with his body sitting in the trench where the comrade-at-arms who brought it in had left it. The cycle has been completed, the wheel turned its last revolution. It is then that the savage humour of the book's title, a quotation from Hamlet, comes home.

> -- Then you live about her waist, or in the middle of her favors?
> -- Faith, her privates we.
> -- In the secret parts of Fortune? O, most true; she is a strumpet.[2]

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1. This is accentuated by Manning's device of using epigraphs from Shakespeare for each of his chapters. They also draw attention to the title's significance, and in their own way add to the irony of the novel.

2. Hamlet, Act II, Scene 2.

The novel ends with a picture of the lifeless body of Bourne and the men waiting silently near it. But more than that, the sergeant-major's thoughts capture the very essence of the thing the war had done to its survivors.

> He was sorry about Bourne, he thought, more sorry than he could say. He was a queer chap. . . . There was a bit of a mystery about him; but then when you come to think of it, there's a bit of a mystery about all of us. He pushed aside the blanket screening the entrance, and in the murky light he saw all the men lift their faces, and look at him with patient, almost animal eyes. Then they all bowed over their own thoughts again. . . . They sat there silently: each man keeping his own secret.[1]

The same truism is found in the Tietjens saga and in The Spanish Farm Trilogy. The war had left all these heroes in isolation, groping into themselves, forever looking for the small group of intimates or the way to love that would ease the pain of their aloneness. Ford's Tietjens had escaped a bleak, lonely existence after the war only through his love for Valentine. Mottram's Lieutenant Skene had been left isolated in a friendless world. Bourne and his comrades--they had been left with a "faith in nothing but themselves and in each other." For such was the heritage of war experience.

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1. Manning, Her Privates We, p. 458.

VI

THE DISENCHANTED WARRIORS

> Now that most of our men in the prime of life have been in the army we seem to be in for a literature of disappointment.
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> C. E. Montague, Disenchantment

After the war a substantial myth began to develop out of the literature of the ex-soldiers and civilians. It was the myth of disillusion, of the "lost" generation and of its decade of ascendancy, the nineteen-twenties. The "war book" engendered a considerable part of this myth, but more than that, it was the one part which can, today, be directly attributed to the effects of war-time experience. The works of this literary genre by and large grew out of individual interpretations of a tangible, collective experience. They were written by participants about The War, and the effects of The War. Because of this they were almost indistinguishable from history. And the effects of such an identification, the extent of it--these can be readily examined.

The "war books" controversy reached its height in the spring of 1930. It had actually begun, as such, a year earlier when "Journey's End" had taken the fancy of the West End and All Quiet on the Western Front was selling at the rate of two editions a month. The novels and autobiographies and essays that have come to be termed "war books" because of that controversy had actually been making desultory appearances throughout the ten

years after the war. Only between 1928 and 1930, however, did they appear in such numbers as to attract attention from the reading public. Then it became clear that they were the words of the unhappy soldier and that perhaps they were, after all, worth taking into account, if only to be better refuted.

To understand the disillusion and angry despair that the war evoked and the public controversy it created a decade later, it is important to recognize this literature of disenchantment as the "evidence of Tommy," the lesson of the literate belligerents. The soldier who had been on active service had suffered. He knew the privations and the injustices of army life. He had watched his comrades being maimed and killed. He had discovered the gulf between his existence at the front and that of war-time England. And when he had returned victorious, he had found that in those halcyon post-armistice days he was rather an inconvenience for his civilian brother--so much so that 400,000 of his kind were left on the verge of destitution in 1920. In a word, he had opened his eyes and he was "fed up." It was only natural, then, that the more literate of his number should express themselves. And as the conflict was sorted out in history, as it began to reveal the ineptitudes which had been an inevitable part of it, as it receded further and further into the memory

of its participants, the war became a symbol to the "unhappy warrior." It represented the disease that had devoured his youth and that still infected his society.

Ten years after the armistice the trauma of delayed shock caused an outpouring of prose by the heretofore silent and seemingly stunned poets who had spoken so sharply in 1917 and 1918. They were more disappointed than the rest, once they had regained their voice, and they didn't hesitate to say so.

> Somehow we must atone to the dead--the dead, murdered, violently dead soldiers. The reproach is not from them, but in ourselves. Most of us don't know it, but it is there and it poisons us. It is the poison that makes us hopeless and lifeless--us the war generation, and the new generation too. The whole world is blood guilty, cursed like Orestes, and mad, and destroying itself.[1]

Richard Aldington's Timon-like rant against his world was more vindictive than most, but the protest he shared in common with the "war books" writers. For they declaimed in unison, and what's more, in mood they were one with the new generation of writers who had sprung up after the war.

The "war books" controversy of 1929-30 developed because there were veterans who felt such works as Aldington's gave a distorted picture of the war--whether those novels and reminiscences

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1. Richard Aldington, Death of a Hero, (1929), p. 32.

owed their origins to literary impulses, to pacifist beliefs, or to base pecuniary motives. And there can be no doubt about this "evidence of Tommy." It did create a somewhat inaccurate impression of the war for the generations that followed it. However, the anti-"war book" case as it was expressed by Douglas Jerrold and others in 1930, went just as far astray in its absolute condemnations of the works. Only by getting outside of it, as it were, can one consider these books fairly. In 1958 the same rancours exist, and the "war books" still offer up their distortions, but another war in the interval has sorted out the contradictions enough that they may be seen in perspective.

Four facts may be noted about them. First, the "war books" that followed on the heels of the armistice were all part of an unsponsored, a spontaneous movement. This, like all literary movements, undoubtedly developed a great many adherents and enemies toward the end of its brief existence. Second, because of the political connotations of a stand either for or against the writings of the "unhappy warriors," it was inevitable that a great many exaggerations and misinterpretations should fall on the works themselves. Third, there was not a book written about the war (including histories) by a combatant that, in one way or another, did

not contain material pertinent to the controversy. Finally, because these "war books" were greatly in vogue for only a brief period during 1928-30 by no means suggests that they have no intrinsic merit as fiction. It actually points out the dual existence of the works as literature and as timely, controversial matter.

The number of disillusioned war novels published makes a discussion of all of them impossible. A consideration of the better and more representative of the type best explains their characteristics. During the war none were published, although Le Feu, in tone, might easily have been cited as the beginning of the form. However, an English equivalent did not appear until the publication of Sir Alan P. Herbert's The Secret Battle (May, 1919).

Set in Gallipoli and in Flanders, the book traces the progress of a sensitive young subaltern through a series of incidents which lead him to his execution for cowardice. Sir Winston Churchill, in his introduction to the 1928 edition, termed it, "one of those cries of pain wrung from fighting troops by the prolonged and measureless torment through which they passed; and like the poems of Siegfried Sassoon should be read in each generation, so that men and women may rest under no illusion about what war means." The Secret Battle is exactly

this. No more vivid description of the trench life in Gallipoli has been written. The book dwells on the miseries attending not so much constant warfare as the forced intimacies and disease and the climate through which the men suffered.

When the action shifts to France, a case is made against the "bogus" few who had undeservedly ferreted out staff jobs. For it is through the machinations of an inept colonel that the hero is sentenced to be shot for cowardice. The narrator is careful to point out that he is describing "the history of a man and not of the war," and that his details are chosen accordingly.[1] There can be little doubt, however, that the work was, as Sir Winston suggests in his introduction, an object-lesson on the agonies of war.

The novel is too pedestrian in its movement to merit any great distinction, and this is due in part to its subject matter. For the tracing of a man's gradual disintegration through shell-shock, and of the circumstances that combine to have him executed make the story painfully pathetic rather than tragic. The cruel machine of war is too much a villain and the sensitivity of the hero too willing a victim to permit

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1. A. P. Herbert, The Secret Battle, (1928), p. 107.

The Secret Battle to escape from being a study in black and white, without benefit of the necessary realities in grey. Yet many of the descriptions are fine, and the novel offers one of the few fictional accounts of the infantry in Gallipoli.

One characteristic of the work is very interesting. The Secret Battle comments on the change in the character of the army that followed the beginning of conscription and the gradual disappearance of the "New Armies."[1] In fact, Herbert uses this in his plot. His hero survives his old comrades in his battalion, and when his nerve does break, a hostile temporary colonel causes his court-martial. This conversion into a mass army via conscription which broke up the comradeship of the volunteers is a major theme in the war literature of disillusion.[2] Again and again during the decade following the war, this change in the character of the B. E. F. is cited as one cause of the depression which infected the young poets and idealists who had enlisted.

An older and more romantic novelist, C. E. Montague, examined this descent into despair in a long essay as early

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1. See above, Chapters II, III, and IV.

2. Aldington especially uses this in his war novel.

as 1922. And Disenchantment not only touched on those qualities of the war that were already being employed in fiction, but charted almost all of those that were to come. The author was well qualified, for certainly few "fell" further than Montague, who was among those "volunteers of the first year of the war" that held "the record in length of vertical fall, and of proportionate severity of incidence upon an inelastic earth."[1] They had enlisted, he wrote, with the boundless illusions described in the poetry of Rupert Brooke. And the first days of army life had fostered this mood:

> It seems hardly creditable now, in this soured and quarrelsome country and time, that so many men of different classes and kinds, thrown together at random, should ever have been so simply and happily friendly, trustful, and keen. But they were, and they imagined that all their betters were too. That was the paradise that the bottom fell out of.[2]

The war revealed to Montague what pre-war Britain had forgotten of itself, or ignored. For when he discovered the discrepancies between army and conventional morality, he had to admit that they were an age-old concomitant of wars. Shakespeare's soldiers had displayed the same faults Montague saw as characteristic of the First War. But this did not

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1. C. E. Montague, Disenchantment, (1922), p. 2.

2. Ibid., p. 12.

excuse in his mind the folly of the staff, the outrageous behavior of sundry government officials and civilians, or the compromises of institutions like the Church.

For all the historical parallels delineating the vices of life in an army, modern war had deprived the soldier of the one virtue of his trade. Two million men could never be a happy few. It was inevitable with so many men that a staff would emerge that was physically divorced from its troops. It had to be to control the front. The result was, as Montague saw it:

> Whenever you passed from east to west across the British zone during the war you would find somebody else, a little more to the west and higher in rank, had not even learnt his job well enough to keep out of the way.[1]

The volunteer of 1914, indeed, had a long way to fall. As the war continued he was to discover the deceit practiced by his newspapers--as necessary propaganda, of course. He listened to non-combatant clergy preaching war, and he knew that they didn't know what they were talking about. He had seen guardsmen and cavalrymen, "the least richly brained soldiers we had," keep the bulk of the distinguished jobs for which brainwork was needed. He had heard of the shirkers in London who were making

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1. Ibid., p. 43.

a good thing out of the war, out of his suffering. And he, the volunteer, had watched in 1916, if he had survived, the rapid dilution of his "elite" New Army regiment into a disorderly mass of conscripts who were entirely incapable of sharing his experiences. In the face of all this and of very lethal war, a fall of spirit was unavoidable, and it was a disillusionment that was carried into peace:

> The limp apathy that we see at elections, the curious indifference in presence of public wrongs and horrors, the epidemic of sneaking pilferage, the slackening of sexual self-control--all these are symptomatic like the furred tongue, subnormal heat, and muddy eye.[1]

This was Montague's disenchantment. The journalist who, at 46, had dyed his hair and enlisted as a private spoke with the authority of an elder on the favorite topic of the young. In a sense, he even spoke for them, save in the last pages of his work, which were reduced to moralizing and suggestions for the future. His two novels, Rough Justice and Right Off the Map were part of that goodly literature of disappointment as well, but they were neither as interesting nor as informative as Disenchantment. While they are forgotten, it remains a classic analysis of the "disease," the best non-fiction that is available on the effects of the war.

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1. Ibid., p. 201.

The major themes of disenchantment were all being exploited during the twenties. Novel after novel that dealt with the disintegrative effects of the conflict was published, in spite of the legend of the public's distaste for war novels in the years directly following the armistice.

Wilfred Ewart, in 1921, had published a war novel which in many ways foreshadowed the very popular work of Michael Arlen. The Way of Revelation had an immense success at about the same time that Ernest Raymond's Tell England was becoming a record-breaking best seller, yet its mood was completely different and much more in tune with the literature of the disenchanted. This first novel by an unknown writer employed all the tricks used by popular novelists to exploit a story without a plot. Ewart took a group of society people and in the first section of his novel portrayed their existence during the months before the war. Then he followed them through the course of the conflict, recording their changes of attitude and the ultimate damage the war did them. The book is a typical "society" novel. Ewart, however, seemed to be working with his own experiences, and the story he created is by no means a pleasant one. Beneath the wrappings of the book's conventionality there is a hint of corruption in the society described. The heroine,

Rosemary, dies at the end of the story in a manner that suggests one of the actual scandals of 1919. She takes an overdose of the drugs she has become addicted to, and rather melodramatically expires at a "victory ball." The villains of the piece quite obviously belong to the world of Ronald Firbank and his coterie, the latter-day decadents of Edwardian and war-time England. Of course, this was unconsciously "smart" writing on the part of Ewart, which appealed to those who had an insatiable appetite for stories of society. The disenchantment is there, however, and it is in the war scenes as well--along with all the stock figures.

If it accomplished little else, The Way of Revelation proved the attractiveness of literature of disillusion to the reading public-at-large long before the successes of Remarque and Sherriff.

In 1924 Peter Deane went a step further in the condemnation of the war-time and post-war society, but in The Victors he took an entirely different line from Ewart. His story describes the unfashionable and unemployed ex-officers who seem to have been so common in the post-war years. His book is a direct indictment, rather than a fashionable revelation of his society.

The Victors is not strictly a book about the war; "It is a story about the 'much worse things' that happened afterwards."[1] Deane has imaginatively examined the plight and the psychology of the unemployed ex-officer, not politically, but from a very human point of view. The young man who before the war had gone to Winchester and for a brief period afterwards had been at Oxford was simply lost in the post-war world. Had he stayed in the army, or been discharged a year earlier he might have found something. As it was, he could only be defeated.

The theme has definite possibilities, and even though The Victors plays too much on the reader's sympathy, it still holds the attention--in spite of the pointed timeliness of the novel and the author's avowed intention of "waking up" Britain to the truth of her behaviour.

The bitter jokes of the doomed hero have a great deal of poignancy. There is a telling comment on the unemployed soldier's attitude to peace: "He said that another war would make life so pleasant but . . . that, unfortunately, all wars end in peace."[2] Indeed, the cynicism of Deane explains itself.

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1. Peter Deane, The Victors, (1925), p. 2.

2. Ibid., p. 46.

When the hero is asked if he is still a socialist, he replies: "I am anything that gets me a job." And one can understand, can sympathize with such an attitude. By the end of The Victors the narrator's asides (a characteristic of many of these books, including The Secret Battle and Death of a Hero) have that bite which is so often lacking in such works. Thus, "All that generation were marked. . . . When I think of Michael I look from the old men to the young wondering which of them I hate the most," is acceptable and self-explanatory in terms of the story. The Victors, however, remains only a reasonably good novel in the long list of "war books." If anything, it is just up to standard. What could be made of such a theme can be seen in William Faulkner's long short story, "Victory." It is much more of an artistic success, perhaps because he could create his Clyde-side ex-officer in the mould of one of his violent and sardonic backwoodsmen from Mississippi. No average hero his, but a violently negative monster who is driven into the snare of the world, yet refuses defeat. "Victory" ends with him immaculately groomed in his rags, standing on a corner begging, but cursing an ex-comrade who wants to be charitable. His "let me alone you son-of-a-bitch"[1]

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1. William Faulkner, Collected Stories, (1948), p. 464.

expresses a more subtle hatred for the world than has been described in most of the "war books." This is the same sentiment that a few of these novelists were attempting to catch in prose, but they were without the advantage of a Mississippian mythology to express defeat and defiance.

These Men Thy Friends (1927) has been described by Cyril Falls as "the cloud no larger than a man's hand which heralded the coming of what is called realistic war fiction."[1] As has been seen, Edward Thompson's novel does not quite merit the distinction thus accorded, but in 1929 it must have been inevitable that this work would seem the first of the large body of "realistic war fiction" (by which Falls meant the "mud and blood" school that was precipitated into public notice by All Quiet on the Western Front.

In fact, These Men Thy Friends is a rather restrained novel in which the descriptions of horrors in the Mesopotamian fighting are carefully kept under control. Thompson, himself an active nonconformist, occupied a great deal of the novel's action with the problems of a young nonconformist padre and a doctor friend who was assigned to a neighboring Indian regiment.

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1. Cyril Falls, War Books, (1930), p. 298.

With these two men as the nucleus of a group of comrades, the plot quietly unfolds the ravages of war upon them.

The flaws that Montague had noticed in the British war machine on the Western Front are all seen by Thompson in the Mesopotamian campaign. Stupid leaders are condemned for the tragedies that befell the troops at Kut and the relief force that was destroyed on the way there. The regular army is made to seem contemptible in an incident involving the officers of one battalion: they use for sport a carefully hidden sniper's post, and when the sniper returns, he is shot by a Turk who had observed the others firing. Certain types of padres come in for a roasting because of their behaviour. All the while Death hangs over the lives of each of the group of friends like a personal Nemesis. Thompson is good at describing this. He does it beautifully. The forlorn cries of his heroes are almost lyrical:

> Our lives are flowing away like that river there--and we have the sense to know that they're flowing away, we carry with us some sort of mirror that shows us the futile things we are. I'm getting afraid to like a fellow I meet. Every man I cared a straw about has gone west. Why do we bother to carry on? What's the use of the civilization we say we're fighting to save?[1]

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1. Edward Thompson, <u>These Men Thy Friends</u>, (1927), p. 254.

Here the war's gift of comradeship is not removed by the introduction of masses of replacements, but by Death itself. That is Thompson's lesson, his moral. What weakens the novel is not this pastoral sermonizing, but a fault of construction. Like other war novelists Thompson had trouble in "telling" his story. Presumably he decided on a shifting third person that moves from each of the four main characters and back again. But this tends to separate the work into rather disjointed episodes, and only the beauty of Thompson's descriptions of the Mesopotamian landscape prevent the novel from becoming uninteresting.

Thus by 1928 there was already a respectable amount of disenchantment in the form of "war books," but as yet those poets who had been so outspoken in the last phase of the war had not re-examined their old wounds. In the following two years, however, the three major war poets who had survived each published accounts of their experiences. Whether their prose came as the result of a sort of delayed shock or rose naturally out of the mood of the time, the zeitgeist, is difficult to say, but the former was probably the main cause of their outcry ten years after the fact. Edmund Blunden and Robert Graves vented their wrath in personal

reminiscences that were written as such.[1] Siegfried Sassoon, however, published his first volume of memories as a combination of fiction and autobiography. He stuck to this method in the remaining two volumes of his trilogy, and as a result, The Complete Memoirs of George Sherston (1937) hovers between the two forms.

Edmund Blunden's Undertones of War (1928) seems hardly identifiable as of the same genre of the disillusioned "war books." It is by far the calmest analysis of the war that a poet has done. Yet he touches the same themes and describes scenes similar to those that, first painted by Barbusse, became a common subject for the disenchanted. Blunden's prose, with its carefully restrained poetry, comes nearest to being the English equivalent of Le Feu, although it is written in a much more quiet mood than the French masterpiece.

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1. Edmund Blunden tried to crystallize the reasons for writing Undertones of War when he did. His statement, though misted over with a poet's tangled vision, is as good as has been written on the subject: "I tried once before. True, when the events were not yet ended, and I drifted into a backwater. But what I then wrote, and little enough I completed, although in its details not much affected by the perplexities of distancing memory, was noisy with a depressing forced gaity then very much the rage . . . and I have been attempting 'the image and horror of it,' . . . in poetry. Even so, when the main sheaves appeared fine enough to my flattering eye, it was impossible not to look again, and to descry the ground, how thickly and how innumerably yet it was strewn with the facts or notions of war experience. I must go over the ground again." Undertones of War, (1928), pp. v-vi.

Blunden was nineteen when he first went on active service, and during his first tour he kept a journal which foreshadowed the poetic impressions of Undertones.[1] It offers the reader a poet's first-hand impression of war and is interesting to compare with the recorded memories of some years later. In Blunden's case there was little difference between the records of 1918 and the prose of ten years later. He saw the trenches always with a poet's eye, but never hysterically. His vision was, in that sense, not unlike Julien Grenfell's, and the brooding melancholy of his war book seems a natural development in view of the mood the war had engendered in most of its combatants. Had Grenfell lived one feels his reactions would have been similar to Blunden's. The descriptions in Undertones of War are like the unanswerable appeals of star shells signalling for supports during the heavy attack. The poignancies of terrible scenes are suddenly revealed to the reader, and then as quickly fade as Blunden continues his narrative. Ypres after its third battle, is caught in one of these sudden illuminations and becomes an indelible memory:

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1. Edmund Blunden, De Bello Germanico, (1930), private edition of 275 copies.

> Waiting there in the gashed hillside for Lewis who had gone below for instructions, we looked over the befouled fragments of Ypres, the solitary sheet of water, Zillebeke Lake, and completed hopelessness. The denuded scene had acquired a strange abruptness of outline; the lake and ashy city lay unprotected, isolated, dominated finally. But further off against the sunset one saw the hills beyond Mount Kemmel, and the simple message of nature's health and worthiness again beckoned in the windmills resting there. There--and here![1]

By November, 1928, when Undertones of War was published, the first evidences of a gathering storm of controversy were making appearances in book reviews and articles. Blunden's work was in itself a very reasonable piece of work on the war. It was just what its title implied, the soft undertones of an immensity; and they fill out the whole of war by insinuation. Yet when Henry Williamson reviewed the work as part of a long article in The London Mercury, he was aggrieved not with Blunden's realities, but at the understatement he seemed to employ in order to make his point: "Mr. Blunden writes with restraint, which is a necessary attitude for the artist; but too much restraint, like too much tranquility in a young writer, may result in sterilization."[2] He went on to say that Blunden's

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1. Blunden, Undertones of War, p. 239.

2. Henry Williamson, "Reality in War Literature," The London Mercury, Volume XIX, No. 111, (January, 1929), p. 300.

men did not suffer like the men of Barbusse, Ewart, Owen, or Sassoon, citing Blunden's description of his battalion pioneers, "Barbusse would have 'got them all wrong,' save in this: they were all doomed."[1]

Williamson showed his article to Blunden before it was finished, and was able to add a footnote from Blunden himself. It offers an interesting view of Williamson which explained much of the sharpness of his article.

> In quoting my British working man passage you make the particular into the general, I think; I defined the instance of the working party in 1916, and they were doomed, because nearly all were knocked out or wounded at Stuff Trench a few weeks afterwards.[2]

Thus the opening phase of the war of books on war was begun. It seems somewhat ironic that this first assault should have been by one of the very worst offenders of the disillusioned school against a reasoned presentation of war. In the eighteen months of literary charge and counter-charge that followed, the "war books" supporters were nearly always on the defensive, rather than vice versa.

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1. Ibid., p. 300.
2. Ibid., p. 304.

There was not "meat" enough in the gentlemanly expositions of Blunden's book, or in the first volume of Sassoon's Complete Memoirs of George Sherston[1] to feed a national controversy, but the material to sustain the arguments that were beginning to germinate was quick in coming.

R. C. Sherriff's play, "Journey's End," perhaps did more than any novel or volume of reminiscence to encourage the public's interest in war literature. Certainly much of the criticism that was later made about the exaggerations of "war books" was indirectly intended for this very successful play.

Sherriff, like Blunden, Williamson, Remarque, and many other war novelists, was very young (eighteen) when he enlisted in the army. He had published nothing before 1929--in fact, "Journey's End" was originally written for amateur production by the Kingston Rowing Club--and certainly hadn't intended a literary career before the success of the play. But a success it was. It received almost universal praise from the critics and took London by storm. At one time five American and four British companies were producing it simultaneously, and not undeservedly, for it was a good play with a great deal of appeal. But more than that, "Journey's End" described the war

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1. Memoirs of a Fox-Hunting Man.

in a way that the public very much wanted to see it. In one sense, the two hours or so of dug-out life quite satisfactorily presents a composite picture of the front. There is "the weariness and good humor, the search for the lean piece of bacon, the taste of chloride of lime in the tea, the incessant spells of duty, the shelling, the casualties, the talk of home." There is all this, as one reviewer put it.[1] But there is also sentimentality and public-schoolboy morality in the play, of a sort which far too often suggest Ernest Raymond's much more banal novel, Tell England. Of course, these were a real part of the war, but their introduction into fiction must be a cautious action for they tend to distorty "reality," rather than to recreate it.

The plot hinges on an old "fag" between two former school chums who suddenly find themselves in the same company. The older, who also has a liking for his friend's sister, is forced to send his young worshipper on a fatal raid. But it is the incidentals, as the reviewers rightly remarked, which are the more interesting. The war itself is the tragedy of "Journey's End." Each of the characters is violently affected by the fighting, disastrously so. The young lieutenant is

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1. A. G. Macdonell, "The Drama," The London Mercury, Volume XIX, No. 111, (January, 1929), p. 315.

killed, along with the middle-aged schoolmaster whom he shares the command of his first raid with. Captain Stanhope, their 22-year-old commanding officer is driven to constant drinking to keep his nerves together. Another officer falls to pieces.

The sentiments such a work aroused could hardly be termed "surprising." The reviewer for The London Mercury had this to say:

> The Peace Societies of England ought to join together and send "Journey's End" on tour throughout the length and breadth of the country. It is worth fifty-times more than all their propaganda, which consists mainly of reprinting out-of-date specimens by elderly gentlemen.[1]

Eric Remarque's Im Westen Nichts Neues was published in translation in March, 1929. All Quiet on the Western Front had even a greater reception than "Journey's End," going through edition after edition in Britain. It is not a good novel. It is too episodic for that, too melodramatic (although this was a quality of the war as well), one might almost say too hysterical. What it describes is often too fantastic to have been anything but true experience, yet it makes "suspicious" fiction. In brief, it is everything Le Feu might have been, but was not.

Perhaps the fact that Herr Remarque's experience was one of defeat and of grim post-war realities has a great deal to do

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1. Ibid., p. 315.

with this variance; yet even if this is the case, it is fairly safe to suppose that few of the avid readers of the book in pre-Second War Britain read it as such. It was too easy to identify oneself in the dedicatory incription.

> Dieses Buch soll weder eine Anklage noch ein Bekenntnis sein. Es soll nur den Versuch machen, über eine Generation zu berichten, die vom Kriege zerstört wurde--auch wenn sie seinen Granatem entkam.[1]

Here is an appealing echo of Gertrude Stein's "You are all a lost generation." In many ways the metaphor is accurate, but it is also a highly romantic one, as romantic as Sherriff's image of the drunken young company-commander who knew he was doomed. This demonstrates an important aspect of the novel. For brutal and dirty as their world was, Remarque's soldiers are romantic figures. They struggle against the insurmountable and they die, and they know they are going to die.[2]

In his novel on the post-war degeneration of Germany, Three Comrades, Herr Remarque emphasizes this aspect of "the lost" by

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1. Erich Maria Remarque, Im Westen Nichts Neues, (Berlin: 1929).

2. Jean Norton Cru describes a similar characteristic in French war fiction: "Jadis le public voulait une guerre romances avec drapeaux déployés et flamberge au vent; aujourd'hui, il aime une guerre non moins romancée, avec boyaux dallés de morts aux grimaces infernales et baisers aux cadavres." Jean Norton Cru, Temoins, (Paris: 1929), quoted in C. O. G. Douie, "Literature and the Great War," Nineteenth Century, Volume CVIII, No. 641, (July, 1930), p. 125.

calling one of his heroes "Siegfried, the last romantic."[1] In fact, it is all of the war veterans described, and especially the three comrades, who are the "last romantics," and they are broken by post-war Germany. Siegfried is killed by a Nazi. The others are left bankrupt and alone in a crumbling world. Im Westen Nichts Neues observes the same sentiments, describes the same soldierly chivalry that existed between the comrades, but in 1929 a critical recognition of these traits was overlooked because of the novel's "frankness" or "coarseness"--depending on the point of view expressed--of the descriptions of war. Latrines, it seemed, had never been the object of serious writers before, and the public was accordingly interested in the pros and cons of such fiction.

Remarque's novel and Sherriff's play were also seen in contrast to those more easily identifiable romantic novels that laid their emphasis on the war's stimulus to heroisms. Thus these works were bound to be noted for their "realism."

The opposition of principles that were brought into the open by the successes of these two works was a complex one. Roughly, there were three main divergences of principle involved. The pacifist point of view was set against the militarist, the

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1. Erich Remarque, Three Comrades, Translated by A. N. Wheen, (Boston: 1937).

individual against the collective, and that of the "horror" school against its opposite the "comradeship" school.[1]

The immediate effect of this public disagreement among critics, amateur and professional, was to identify fiction even more sharply with the time in which it was written. As a result of being classed with reminiscences, and even with histories of the conflict, the war novels that were published or reissued in 1929-30 began to receive a new type of critical appraisal. Such a book's worth as a novel too often seemed almost secondary to the "political" implications of the work. This was obvious in the article by Henry Williamson referred to above. It was as clear in the essay-reviews and correspondences that followed in Britain's literary magazines. H. M. Tomlinson, St. John Irving, Clennel Wilkinson, C. O. G. Douie, and a host of others all fell upon the subject like birds of prey. Suddenly it seemed that all the writers of disillusion were either "engagée,"[2] (committed

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1. A. C. Ward has an interesting and useful commentary on these oppositions in The Nineteen-Twenties, (1930), Chapter VII.

2. The "engagée" writer in France has been defined as one who takes a stand on the problems of his time, who is committed to a particular point of view. Sartre has employed the term especially in its political context. There is no comparable term in English, and it is a very useful one as it describes a type of writer that has become quite common in the last fifty years.

to one point of view) or literary hacks out to capitalize on the public's lust for the sordid side of the war, or misguided and too sensitive intellects unable to appreciate the total implications of modern war. There was, no doubt, some justification for these accusations, as well as for their refutations. Yet what is most interesting about them are their implications for war literature. After January, 1929, and until the furor had been forgotten, no novel about the war could be received as simply a "novel," a work of art. Too many had, in fact, served the purpose of one cause or another, and so works like Manning's Her Privates We were unjustly sullied, were never fairly given the sort of attention their literary merits deserved. Others received notice to which they had no claim. With this, history and fiction, indeed, were inextricably bound in the mind of the reading public. Every war novel had become by definition, "engagée."

The controversy itself is not quite as easy to describe. First, there was the political implications of it. Pacifist writing represents a considerable portion of the fiction and non-fiction that came of the war. From the early machinations of Fenner Brockway, Bertrand Russell, and others, this pacifist prose developed into a recognized school. Siegfried Sassoon, among the war poets, had identified himself with the movement, and by describing in verse his experiences on the Western Front,

had been among the first to use the horror of war as a prime motive against it and against his country's continued participation in it. After the war it became common practice to "show what war was really like in order that it may never happen again." Ford Madox Ford and R. H. Mottram both used this argument about their own work. But the true political implications and their and others' feelings cannot be judged by this. A distaste for war such as they displayed was not a blinding passion, and their work transcends mere propaganda for a particular cause.

Other novels did not. Of course, members of the extreme Left had not experienced the war of the soldiers. As conscientious objectors they couldn't. So the prose substantiations for their beliefs, which depended on horror to put across their point, had to come from men who had grown into the Left via their war experiences. And these men were as much hampered by ideology as helped. For the nineteen-twenties proved a period of disillusionment for the political Left as well as for the ex-soldier. In fact, what happened was that the pacifistic war novels were not written from inside the Left at all. They were the work of unhappy, very isolated ex-soldiers like Henry Williamson and Richard

Aldington. It was for the Left to recognize in them their own cause. But such novels were not limited to political identifications. They also represented the individual as against the collective point of view and the "horror school" of fiction as opposed to the "comradeship school."

Henry Williamson's The Wet Flanders Plain (1929) and The Patriot's Progress (1930) are among the bitterest of this type of propaganda. Of the two, The Patriot's Progress comes closest to being a novel, by virtue of its plot; the other is simply Williamson's own brand of propaganda. Both are an attack on a society that had permitted the war to happen. Both contain almost every outrage of sensibility that the war caused.

The Patriot's Progress opens with a satirical description of the shift in public opinion over Serbia during the first days of August, 1914, and the war propaganda that followed the invasion of Belgium. It contrasts the sharp differences between officers and enlisted men, describes the misery of army life, catches the gradual cooling of ardour on the part of the soldiers, and creates out of the "Etaples Meeting" a legendary revolt of the masses. Every point is Williamson, not reality. What the book does is to establish as the truth every war situation that was called in doubt during the literary

controversy. As Clennel Wilkinson phrased it, he was one of those who "like an inverted sun-dial . . . stood on his head in the mud and blood counting only the darker hours."[1]

However, his soldier has experiences that must have been real enough. While in France he goes to a brothel for the first time--because it was there and so was the war and so was he. He arrives at a stage when he "took no heed of the dead men, nor the wounded on stretchers. He just kept going on one hope: the hope of getting a wound which would put him out of the war."[2] He suffers field punishment for drunkenness--punishment of a sort that is comparable with the labors of Sisyphus. He has to put up with the folly of uncomprehending padres who themselves escape from the reality of war by believing such things as "that Christ had come again to the world, arising in the comradeship of men crucified on the battlefields."[3] He is finally wounded in a futile attack, loses his leg, and is sent back to England. In the end he is forever estranged from the civilians at home.

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1. Clennel Wilkinson, "Recent War Books," The London Mercury, Volume XXI, No. 123, (January, 1930), p. 237.

2. Henry Williamson, The Patriot's Progress, (1930), p. 125.

3. Ibid., p. 176.

There is nothing surprising in this progression of experiences, but Williamson had made his John Bullock into a sort of Everyman, and his suffering into a universal experience. What offended the more taciturn reader was not so much what was said as what was left out. St. John Irving presented this thesis most adroitly:

> War novels are lop-sided--the contemporary novelists, and especially the war novelist, is a specialist; he does not deal in the whole business of life, but only in a portion of it, and he behaves as if the part were equal to the whole.[1]

This applies as well to militarist literature (Sapper's novels are perhaps the best of this genre) which presented as one-sided a picture of war. The professional soldiers who wrote and others who saw in war an outlet for their particular natures were biased in the opposite direction.

It is here that the opposition of principles involved in the controversy become intertwined. The Patriot's Progress was intended as propaganda. The novel form was simply adopted by the author to convey his message. Williamson's use of horror to describe war experience is a means to an end. Although he may have expressed his own memories of war, it is certain that what he recorded was purposefully anti-war,

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1. St. John Irving, "Men, Women, and Events," Time and Tide, (May 9, 1930).

intentionally exaggerated.[1] Yet it is indisputable that the novel represents other phases of the controversy as well.

The "horror" and "comradeship schools" were in fact represented to some degree by every war novel. Sherriff's play and Remarque's Im Westen Nichts Neues depended on both qualities for their action, as did almost every study of the front-line fighting. Many of these were accused of over-exaggerating the horrors of modern war at the cost of under-stressing the comradeship of army life. Certainly, by using trench scenes as the high points, the foci of the narrative, and connecting them with conventional condensations of the time in between, such as "We went back into the line a month later," horrors were often over-emphasized. But the comradeship that existed was seldom totally neglected.[2] And if it was,

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1. See Henry Williamson, The Sun in the Sands, (1945). This autobiographical study of the 1920's does much to explain the sharp reaction to the war that his novels express.

H. M. Tomlinson in an article on "war books" during the controversy made a direct expression of sentiments which called for such propaganda: "There were days and nights on the Somme when the scene of earth suggested the day after the last day. 'Things,' the men used to say, 'can't ever be the same again.' And we had better see that they are not." H. M. Tomlinson, "War Books," Criterion, Volume IX, No. 36, (April, 1930), p. 404.

2. Both Williamson's and Aldington's heroes lived in a sort of friendless void during their war experiences, but there were few other fictional characters who suffered the same fate.

there were novelists (Sapper is the best example) who were as guilty of over-exaggerating the fine comradeship which disappeared with the armistice.

The horror, too, was nothing new--Sassoon and Owen and Blunden had described it in poetry as early as 1917. Rather, it was the opposition to descriptions of it which had not been heard before. When, on April 7, 1930, Brigadier-General C. D. Baker-Carr wrote to The Times protesting that a false picture of the British Army had been created by war fiction, he started an avalanche of such complaints. His point was that the "war books" were both true and false: "They are true inasmuch as they set forth certain specific aspects of the War; they are false inasmuch as they fail utterly in depicting the general aspect of the War."[1] In this there was not only a complaint against the exaggerations of horror; here was also the third opposition of principles: that of the individual as opposed to the collective view. The debate was developed further by Douglas Jerrold in a pamphlet, The

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1. Brigadier-General C. D. Baker-Carr, "Correspondence," The Times, (April 7, 1930), p. 10.

Lie about the War (1930). Writing of the novels of Hemingway, Montague, Herbert, Mottram, and a few others, he was at pains to point out the defects of such works--not as novels but as presentations of the war! Jerrold obviously did not like the books with which he was dealing and he presented his case accordingly. His main tenet was that, "Every one of these books . . . deals with every conceivable kind of struggle except the struggle of one army against another."[1] This is, of course, no sensible criticism of fiction. History perhaps might be limited to the chronological and geographic struggle of armies, but fiction, as Joseph Conrad had said, is human history, or it is nothing. And there is very little that is "human" about one massive army of six million men--a fact that accounted for no small part of the disillusion and anger that sprang from the war.

Thus, this literary controversy had, in a little over six months, caused the criticisms of war novels to be not a fair critical evaluation of their literary merits, but a judgement of their "veracity" in terms of the total war experience of the nation. The only evaluative bibliography of publications on the war in English was seriously affected by this. Cyril

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1. Douglas Jerrold, The Lie about the War, Criterion Miscellany No. 9, (1930), p. 17.

Fall's War Books was comprehensive enough in its selections but only grudgingly willing to admit the merits of works which generally consider the war from a negative point of view. His definition of "realistic war fiction" pretty well descries his bias:

> The characteristics of this book and its successors, whether fiction or reminiscence, are similar; indeed it is common gossip that several writers sat down to produce one in the same vein after watching Herr Remarque's sales go soaring up. . . . The writers set themselves not to strip war of its romance--for that was pretty well gone already--but to prove that The Great War was engineered by knaves or fools on both sides, that the men who died in it were driven like beasts to the slaughter, and died like beasts, without their deaths helping any cause or doing any good.[1]

That such a view colours the judgements of the work is undeniable. For instance, Falls, in his note on Ernest Hemingway's A Farewell to Arms, views the novel as a disgusting study of a deserter which derides patriotism, honour, and self-respect, and makes all causes seem ignoble. No journalist in 1930 was more violent than this in his evaluations.

By and large such criticisms were directed at the pose of disenchantment itself. But the soldier, giving the "evidence of Tommy" had found his voice. He meant to be recognized, and

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1. Cyril Falls, War Books, (1930), p. x.

criticism be damned. Moreover, there was no justification for isolating his brand of pessimism from that of the other writers of the period. To do so was too much an echo of the old, old attitude that "what the soldier said isn't evidence."

In examing the literary qualities of these novels, it is important to dwell on the biased realities of their characteristics only inasmuch as they affect the honesty, the sensitivity of the work. If they tend (as does Williamson's fiction) to create overt propaganda, they necessarily limit their significance as literature. For sensitivity implies a recognition of all the characteristics of a particular subject and not simply those of one side--though one side may be stressed. Thus no novel could pretend to fully portray the war or the generations who came of age with the war if it depended on the fare that came to be identified with disillusioned novels:

> Banality, cynicism, contempt for motives and for leadership in the council chamber and the field, an obsession with the discreditable--as drunkenness, sexual-debauchery, cowardice, injustice--and an insistence upon the most horrible figures of warfare--as ghostly wounds, flowing blood, stinking corpses, rats feeding upon the slain, lice, mud, whole units mown down by machine-gun fire, military executions--to the exclusion of all others.[1]

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1. "The Garlands Wither," Times Literary Supplement, (June 12, 1930), p. 485.

These are elements for highly particularized literature dealing with one individual's experience to the exclusion of all else, or they are for "engagée" writers intent upon using the war for their own ends. In neither case can they be considered a full statement of the lessons of war. Yet, to have their novels thought so was an expressed intention of many authors whose work belongs in this category. And their work does suffer from the difference between intention and achievement.

The best writers of such novels were Richard Aldington, H. M. Tomlinson, and Siegfried Sassoon. Yet, even their work is only competent where it might have been distinguished. Each saw the war as a blight that was totally destructive in its effects on their society. They were like Mottram in their vision, but they had not the saving grace of a permanency inherent in their subject, with which to describe the endurance of the land, and of man. Mottram used his "ferme espagnole" as such a symbol. He anchored his novel in life with it and was able, on that firm ground, to build a dark structure that was the tragedy of the war. When the war ended in his novel, Madeline and the land remained. When it ended for the heroes of Aldington and Tomlinson, the world in a sense ended with it. The war was, for them, Armageddon.

Siegfried Sassoon's The Complete Memoirs of George Sherston, though similar in intent, have a somewhat different total effect. Sassoon attempted to leave a clear picture of the war by writing disguised autobiography. In fact, The Complete Memoirs of George Sherston are very similar to the reminiscences of Robert Graves in Goodbye to All That. The two poets are almost interchangeable figures in the two books, and refer to each other in their work. But Sassoon preferred thin disguises for his character and a first-person narrative by one "George Sherston."

Memoirs of a Fox-Hunting Man is a lyrical, plotless history of a gentleman of limited means growing up in the country and later going into the army. Sherston is portrayed as an ordinary sort of man whose fox-hunting and cricket have become his only interest. He is a type of latter-day Georgian content in the idyll of rural England and her sports. The war breaks into this scene with a vengeance and completely negates Sherston's past. His two closest friends are killed, and the experience very quickly "wakes up" the country gentleman. Yet the novel doesn't end so much as suspend itself in the perpetual depression of the war's contrasts:

> And here I was, with my knobkerrie in my hand, staring across at the enemy I'd never seen. Somewhere out of sight beyond the splintered tree-tops of Hidden Wood a bird had begun to sing. Without knowing why I remembered it was Easter Sunday. Standing in that dismal ditch, I could find no consolation in the thought that Christ was risen. I splashed back to the dug-out to call the others up for "stand-to."[1]

The next two Sherston novels continue with variations this sort of experience. They are perhaps the most minute accounts of an infantry officer in the war, ignoring nothing of importance and certainly not describing only the "high-points" of army life. Yet all the usual satirical jibes at army life are there, for Sherston very soon comes to hate the machinery of war. After a rather simple-minded heroic display which momentarily restores his lost confidence, Sherston is invalided home with a wound. But the "climate" of war-time England soon sickens him into an outburst against the war and a liaison with a politician remarkably similar to Bertrand Russell. This is Sassoon's own story. The senseless protest, the rehabilitation in a mental hospital, the friendship with Dr. Rivers, and the inevitable return to soldiering--the whole of Sassoon's experience is recorded.[2] The Memoirs were not

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1. Siegfried Sassoon, The Complete Memoirs of George Sherston, (1937), p. 282.

2. See Siegfried Sassoon, Siegfried's Journey, 1916-1920, (1945).

totally autobiographical, however. Sassoon was able to stand outside himself and comment on his hero. He was aware, as many writers seemed not to be, that there was a total experience in a life whose center was the war, so the novel closes on an anti-climactic note.

Within the space of a brief paragraph Sassoon puts his figure and his experiences into an objective perspective. Here was one man, he seemed to say, whose experience accounted for his anger; you, the reader must make of him and the war what you will.

> How could I begin my life all over again when I had no conviction about anything except that the War was a dirty trick which had been played on me and my generation? That, at any rate, was something to be angry and bitter about now that everything had fallen to pieces and one's mind was in a muddle and one's nerves were all on edge. . . .[1]

There is in the work enough of honesty and sensitivity to make a fine novel. Yet, somehow it isn't. Perhaps it is too much memoir for that, too literally true. For it is plotless, expository prose flecked with flashes of poetry; it ends, if anything, in the basic meaninglessness of life. It explains nothing. It means nothing. In a sense, it reflects nothing but the isolated experience of one man following a rather

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1. Ibid., p. 655.

haphazard existence from the vanities of an idle life to the vanities of an involved one.

All Our Yesterdays is a work in a rather similar mood, although H. M. Tomlinson saw the war from a different perspective from Sassoon. "Though I saw something of it all," he wrote in 1930, "I was not a soldier. I but looked on, and therefore it happens to be my province to testify."[1] Tomlinson like Montague saw the war in different terms. He felt in it and in the events before it the presence of concrete symbols which caught the spirit of the age, which were definable and distinct from the less sophisticated "progresses" of the younger writers.

All Our Yesterdays begins with the Boer War and ends just after the armistice has been signed. Within that course the novel combines history, prophecy, and satire to arrive at ultimate fiction. The result is that the work is often episodic and very uneven in quality. Tomlinson did not have the advantages of Ford in describing both the civilian at home and the soldier in the trenches, and his work clearly suffers. Ford's method had allowed him to interweave episodes

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1. H. M. Tomlinson, "War Books," The Criterion, Volume IX, No. 36, (April, 1930), p. 403.

very similar to those of Tomlinson, and to make of them integral parts of the whole. Tomlinson's being an essayist perhaps had something to do with the loose construction of his novel, for pieces of his work seem to be individual and complete statements.

It is these individual fragments which are the best part of the novel. The title from Shakespeare sets the despairing tone of the work, suggests the philosophic meaninglessness arising from the episodes. There is a dream-parable in which the world of 1900 is seen as a great cardboard ship that is launched and begins to crumble away as soon as it begins its journey. Yet the passengers ignore it and the ship goes on, undeterred by its rottenness, into the rough seas of the Twentieth Century. The senseless squabble between nations over remote, valueless colonies is caught in a short story reminiscent of Conrad's "Heart of Darkness"--it is here that Tomlinson, the traveller, is at his best. Again, there is a short, wonderful tale about a French officer visiting an English mess which admirably illustrates the frailties of the war-time alliance. But the total impression of such episodes is chaotic. Why should they be lumped together? What is their significance as a whole? Does such experience really end with the war? These are the questions that haunt the reader of All Our Yesterdays. The

breakdown of the old order and the culmination of this in the war are clear enough. That morals had to be re-evaluated, and values reconsidered, is clear enough. But Tomlinson, like Sassoon, is describing seemingly chaotic experience, meaningless events. His sole intention seems to be to move the reader to an indictment of his society for its sins. "Can you and I dodge our responsibility for the work to which they had to be left in those days?" he wrote in 1930. "For my part I intend to rub it in till I die."[1] His episodes do this. They "rub in" the phrases of the social historian:

> The downfall of Europe's august but faulty establishment, the end of the industrial era as the Victorians knew it, with the collapse of its Imperialism under the weight of its own necessary and inevitable guns, are more than phrases. To the men who were in France they never were mere phrases. Those fellows read those phrases in a spectacle terrible enough to break up familiar acceptances and to destroy ancient faiths. The lesson could not have been more emphasized by a veritable archangel descending to earth to announce doom.[2]

Like Montague's Disenchantment, All Our Yesterdays is a magnificent examination of the social implications of the war. But neither is a novel. Montague's two attempts to put his feelings into the form of a novel had been rather dismal

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1. Ibid., p. 405.
2. Ibid., p. 405.

failures. His short stories,[1] however, like Tomlinson's episodes in All Our Yesterdays, were much more of a success. The disenchanted novel, it seemed, was a very difficult thing to do well.

Of all these war novels of disillusion the most unique and the most interesting is Richard Aldington's Death of a Hero. Aldington felt as strongly as had the most virulent of the anti-war writers. And he was the most open about his feelings, going so far as to compare himself with Timon of Athens in his long rants against--one has to say it--against the world.

His novel exists as an intriguing paradox, and in that way is an unusually accurate reflection of the emotions the war stirred in these writers. For they were all, to some extent, plagued by the same contradictions. The romance inherent in the "mud and blood" is a very real thing in almost all their work--it might be called the romance of despair and disillusion. They, like all ex-soldiers, were set apart by their experience. In that sense they were somewhat akin to the knights returned from a campaign in the Holy Land. Yet,

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1. Fiery Particles, (1923).

at the same time, they could write bitterly of the falseness of the world that had sent them to war and destroyed their comrades.

Aldington is a mass of contradictions in Death of a Hero. It is a rant as virulent as anything Thersites was capable of; yet the author admitted in his prefatory letter to believing in men, believing "in a certain fundamental integrity and comradeship, without which society could not endure."[1] Then he described his novel as a memorial to his generation; yet he has not even been gentle with them, for he depicts a great deal of their agony as having been self-inflicted. Most interesting of all, he thought of Death of a Hero as a "jazz novel," something very modern. Yet the most striking characteristic of the novel is its affinity with Samuel Butler's The Way of All Flesh, a work written fifty years before in the height of "Victoriana."

The paradoxes are self-explanatory in Death of a Hero. They have developed naturally from an antagonism against bourgeois (Victorian) values--values which the war was supposed to have destroyed--and a corresponding discovery that the intelligentsia, who were largely the brains of the movement against such values,

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1. Richard Aldington, Death of a Hero, (1929), p. x.

were in themselves as corrupt as Aldington thought Victorian morality. This is the "message" of Aldington's novel. It requires the paradoxes to bring the lesson home as he intended it. He saw his generation caught in the middle of two extremes at a time when the pendulum of public opinion was swinging from the one to the other. The result was somehow bound up in the war, where his generation died, where it was destroyed by its society.

To get this across Aldington depended on exaggerated satire which spared nothing save modern science (i.e. contraceptives) in its ravages. The largest part of the novel deals with Victorian family life. But one senses that the enmity of the author is directed at the persistence of the "disease," and only secondarily at its ramifications for his hero. Percy Wyndham Lewis had clubbed the same horse in Tarr (1918). After the Edwardians, one would have thought it was pretty well dead--but not so! Butler had opened up new fields, and the generation growing up through the war had discovered that "Victoriana" could be applied to any restriction on the young. Thus Aldington was not alone in his anger. In that sense he was definitely speaking for his generation. Disgust with the older, the parent generation was a common theme in the nineteen-twenties. It made no difference whether they were

generals stupidly prolonging the war, politicians misguiding the nation, war-profiteers secretly gloating over their successes, older patriots sending the young off to be killed in their place, or parents ruining their children. It was a persistent attitude with the young; it partly accounted for the popularity of disillusioned war literature. Nothing could have expressed this general feeling better than Aldington's satire. Death of a Hero is outrageous in its charges, but one can't laugh at them as one can at the satire of Candide or Gulliver's Travels. It is too serious. It has to be taken seriously. That is Aldington's way.

> The death of a hero! What mockery, what bloody cant! What sickening putrid cant! George's death is a symbol to me of the whole sickening bloody waste of it, the damnable stupid waste and torture of it.[1]

After the discourse on George's early family life comes the most intriguing part of the novel. Aldington's working out of the intrigue which snares the young man is masterly. He is thrust into the world of London's literary dilettantes and "enlightened" people where he is caught up in a morass every bit

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1. Ibid., p. 31.

as bad as that of Victorian morality. The characters are thinly disguised literary figures handled in a way that is very reminiscent of Aldous Huxley's Point Counter Point. Ford Madox Ford is there along with all the English Review and The New Age set. Significantly, it is via this "enlightened" circle that the hero meets his wife-to-be and also his mistress. Together with the war the two women destroy George's will to live. A conscripted battalion of make-shift soldiers and the chances of war do the rest. He takes a totally unnecessary risk and is killed; Aldington's point is that he was driven to it.

The story is a bitter reflection of the times, but the author's asides throughout the novel are even more violent. Again and again the narrator cries out:

> When I meet an unmaimed man of my generation, I want to shout at him: "How did you escape? How did you dodge it? What dirty trick did you play? Why are you not dead, trickster?" It is dreadful to have outlived your life, to have shirked your fate, to have overspent your welcome. There is nobody upon earth who cares whether I live or die, and I am glad of it, so glad of it.[1]

There is a disturbing note of hysteria that runs through the whole novel. It is rather like reading accounts of the life

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1. Ibid., p. 227.

of D. H. Lawrence. The agony is so similar. Only the ectasies are missing.[1]

Although it is necessary to Aldington's type of satire, such hysteria is a false note in the work. It tends too often to the sentimental. It pleads too consciously for pity. But then Aldington called Death of a Hero a "jazz novel," and that sort of "wailing the blues" was perhaps what he meant. The cry of hysteria, the sentimental lament for his generation, is the only thing there is to cover up the novel's deficiency. For like all the disillusioned Aldington lacked a philosophy, and precisely because of that the book fails to fulfill its promise.

A completely successful novel, a work of major importance, depends on a myriad of elements for its total effects. Its form, its matter, its style, its intent must all blend into a whole. And behind them all must be a philosophic vision, some conception of the world. Ford and Mottram had a sense of the

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1. Aldington used the scenes of war in very much the same way that Lawrence used nature--to reflect the mental states of his heroes. The similarities between the two men are quite striking, but Aldington's Lawrentian prose, like his imagist poetry, falls far short of the mark of its examples. It should be added that though Aldington's fiction approaches Lawrence's reactions, it does not bear much relation to the "master's" prose. Significantly, it is the philosophy that is lacking in Aldington's work.

permanency of things, of the immutable that always resides in the face of change, from which to build. Manning worked with a deep appreciation of Fortune, and moulded his tragedy from it. The disenchanted did not have this. Their's was a meaningless world and their fiction suffered from it.

Yet the disillusion of the "lost," the war generation, had the potentiality of tragedy in its themes. Ernest Hemingway demonstrated this in A Farewell to Arms; but he did not make it out of disillusion alone. His war hero was suffused with stoicism that he had learned from the war. He could view himself and the war in perspective, dispassionately and impersonally: "They threw you in and told you the rules and the first time they caught you off base they killed you."[1] The blame was not laid to politicians or to nations, but to life itself. He was disillusioned but his philosophy kept him from getting lost in self-pity. The same was true of Manning's Private Bourne. Aldington's narrator couldn't make such a discovery in the history of George Winterborne. He could only show the world what it had done to his generation, point out its guilt. But then he was not alone in his angry despair. That was the message of the disenchanted.

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1. Ernest Hemingway, A Farewell to Arms, (1958), p. 252.

VII

THE EXTENT OF WAR LITERATURE

> And you know the homing perfume of wood burned,
> at the termination of ways; sense here near
> habitation, a folk life here, a people, a culture
> already developed, already venerable and rooted.
> David Jones, In Parenthesis

Six million men served in the British forces during the First World War. A few were drafted to serve in their peace-time occupations; more were professional soldiers; still more volunteered to take up arms. And the able men between eighteen and fifty who were left were eventually conscripted into the fighting machine. Of the male population in 1914, 21.11 per cent were recruited into the army alone. Indeed, it was no exaggeration to say an entire generation fought the war and that almost all its writers were included in the fighting and dying. These men didn't see the conflict from the outside; they were in the midst of it. For them, the war meant the trenches in front of Ypres, or Gallipoli in June, or Mesopotamian deserts, or the intolerable boredom of Salonika; and it was of these things that they wrote, not of the total experience of a four-year campaign on as many fronts. Thus it is that the body of fiction the war generation left behind is concerned mainly with recitations of varied individual experiences in the immensity of war. A total view from the inside was impossible until some time after the event, and as a result, every front has had its chroniclers in fiction, almost every

phase of the fighting is commemorated in prose.

The novelists had good precedence for using combat experiences as a subject for fiction. War has played a prominent role in every society's literary achievements. One has only to think of the numerous national epics which civilizations have produced to realize that this is true. In the Western tradition war has had its place in prose as well as in poetry. Though fiction as it is recognized today is a relatively new development, there can be seen in the very personal history of Thucydides and in Xenophon's Anabasis--one might almost term it a personal reminiscence--a war literature cum history set as far back as the Greek tradition. Further, with the development of the epic form in the English Novel itself, it was inevitable that war in the Twentieth Century should come to be written of at length only in prose, yet in a manner that suggests again and again the work of centuries on the immortal subject of war. Thus, the discoveries of the writers of 1914-18 were similar in many ways to those of the war literature of the past, for the pathos and humour and sentiment and strain of war have not much changed in a few thousand years.

In the Nineteenth Century there had been two wars very similar to the first great struggle of the Twentieth. Tolstoy's Sevastopol, stories of the Crimean campaign, describe bombardments

and trench warfare that might almost have come out of the Western Front. Stephen Crane's great novel on the American Civil War, The Red Badge of Courage, conveys the same impression. But no war had ever before involved so many men in its agonies, nor produced as much literature as did the First World War. Therein lies the difference.

No international conflict has been more thoroughly catalogued by literary artists than has this great struggle. Anthologists, coming to the problem of compiling an accurate picture of its many aspects were always faced with too much, rather than too little, good material. Such profusion even led C. B. Purdom to introduce sixty new personal narratives into the mass of war literature, his idea being in Everyman at War to produce the voice of the great mass of the soldiers, the non-literary belligerents as opposed to their atypical, literary comrades. What he did prove was that his "average men" were no better able to express the actualities of war experience than were the professional writers. It is even to be doubted that their chief qualifications--as "average men"--made them any more representative of "Everyman" than their literary brothers-in-print.

Another anthologist assembled a mass of fragments from history, autobiography, reminiscence, and fiction, which he

intended to reflect the war much more accurately than had history alone. But this too was no great success, for Guy Chapman's Vain Glory only succeeded in demonstrating the endless mass of material at his disposal; his "personal fragments" became impersonal in their brief form and were lost among the mass of reports included in the volume. The good literature that came from the belligerents had, it seemed, to be a full reflection of their own individual experience in order to be of real literary or historical value. This was further emphasized by the literary success of John Brophy's The Soldier's War. It alone, of all these collections, offered a varied, yet unconfused, portrait of the struggle simply because Brophy strove to prove by his collection of essays and narratives that, "the prose literature which has already /1929/ risen out of the War is a permanent achievement worthy to survive as art, irrespective of its value as a social document."[1]

Inevitably all these collections fell back on the non-fiction of Blunden, Graves, and others for at least part of their material. This was necessary in order to cover the more exotic war areas such as James Bridie had described in Some

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1. John Brophy, The Soldier's War, (1929), p. xi.

Talk of Alexander,[1] but there was good fiction in abundance on the larger fronts. Novels on the ground fighting in France, Gallipoli, Russia, and Mesopotamia have already been discussed. Other spheres of action produced good fiction too, fiction that shouldn't be overlooked for those on the more common fields of combat.

No account of war novels would be complete without some mention of the stories arising from the war in the air. For if there was the real stuff of romance anywhere in the war it was in the exploits of the "knights" the "air-arm" produced. The secret service accorded as attractive a sphere of fiction, of course, and the commanding generals offered unique opportunities to the novelist. Obviously, these three subjects were bound to be capitalized upon; yet, significantly, it was not so much the romantic heroisms that the best novel on each of these phases worked with, but the grimmer realities they involved. This, in general, was a characteristic of most serious war novels, though works of a somewhat more romantic nature were derived from the merchant service, and from the experiences of prisoners in Holland.

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1. Bridie's reminiscences are remarkable in more than one way. His stories of life in the Middle East and southern Russia offer a comic relief from the drearier aspects of war and at the same time they portray its romance in a way that few novels have.

Finally, in a survey of the extent of war literature, it must be asked if any British work on the war was attempted in, and/or belongs to, the epic tradition. That the war occasioned such works, there can be little doubt, but it is interesting to note that to date, the most ambitious and most enigmatic novel of epic proportions has come from abroad. Just as the great masterpiece of satire on the 1914-18 War, Jaroslav Hašek's The Good Soldier Schweik arose from a less phlegmatic nation, so has the one epic myth of the war, William Faulkner's A Fable, come from a people whose traditions are far less settled in history than are Britain's. Few British writers of the war essayed this form. The success of those who have tried to create an epic has, with two exceptions, been an indifferent one. Yet both of the two memorable works in this tradition are only doubtfully within the scope of this study, for they are not novels in the strictest sense of the word.

Such, then, is the general extent of war literature. A consideration of the better of the novels hinted at above should bring out the full significance of this variety. For all of them were sincere efforts to produce good literature out of a subject at hand and very close to the heart of the novelists.

V. M. Yeates, like the figures of the disenchanted novels, was a man truly doomed by the war. While flying in France with the R.A.F., he had contracted tuberculosis--a common illness among combat pilots--and had never fully recovered from the disease. In 1933, after much encouragement from Henry Williamson, a boyhood friend, Yeates began the task of writing a novel out of his own experiences. A year later he had finished Winged Victory, but the effort had been too much, and four months after its publication he died from the illness incurred on active service.

The novel has caught Yeates's own life in its mood. In a sense, Winged Victory is quite similar to Sassoon's war fiction. But Yeates, though he was relatively inexperienced as a writer, held tenaciously to the necessities of his art and was ever aware of the demands of the form he had chosen. He admitted as much in the inscription on Williamson's copy of the novel:

> My chief difficulty was to compromise between truth and art, for I was writing a novel that was to be an exact analysis and synthesis of a state of mind: for these purposes an overwhelming and untidy accumulation of detail seemed necessary. Afterwards H. W. [Williamson] cut my ending into shape, and then I pruned a further six or seven thousand words . . . and there was the book, true, in essence though some of "the bitter wisdom of retrospect has got into some of the conversation."[1]

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1. Quoted in H. Williamson's Introduction to V. M. Yeates, Winged Victory, (1939), p. 6. First published in 1934.

His novel is the better for this--at least it is more a novel than a personal reminiscence because of it. Still it must be remarked that Winged Victory isn't a complete success.

Yeates, like all the good writers using the war as a subject, found in it a new moral code to grapple with in place of the one which, even before August, 1914, was crumbling. For, even if the ethics of war in the R.F.C. were often called in doubt by Yeates, he saw that they were at least a natural development of the existence they governed, and he realized that they could be described. Edwardian morality, on the other hand, had been a nebulous quality for its authors; its decay could be recorded, but little else could be said of it. Flying was relatively new, and it offered Yeates the opportunity of re-creating and defining the morality of the profession in war time in order to reflect individual states-of-mind. The long monotonous days of the fliers who flew only when the weather was decent, and then for no more than four hours a day, were not skipped over for the sake of the action; Yeates seemed almost to concentrate on them because they were so much a part of the life. In fact, the details all but drown a very beautiful

novel, even though their inclusion was an artistic principle with Yeates and has much to do with the beauty of Winged Victory. He had written to Williamson, "You say I mustn't let things happen as in life. I MUST. Art is selection, not alteration."[1] However, the monotony is too real, and upon the publication of the work, the critics--what few reviewed it--attacked it on these grounds. To some extent, they were justified, but the novel still ranks as an outstanding work on the war.

Yeates was a disenchanted writer. He viewed the war as a violently negative thing, an evil; but Winged Victory is not a disguised criticism of society. There is throughout a search for values which preoccupies the main figure of the book, and they are found in friendship. As in Conrad's studies of isolated man, when the discovery of this unblemished gift is made, it is as quickly cancelled by fate. The hero's friend is killed by machine-gunners, and in a fury of hate, Cundall in turn strafes and kills them. The effect of it all is to set his imagination onto a vision of the war as a huge blood feud that is perpetual, each side always having

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1. Yeates, Winged Victory, p. 3.

a murder to cancel out in vengeance--until those remaining, the survivors, are left to mourn alone for their friends.

The stuff of tragedy is here. Further, it is effectively counterpointed by the humorous debauches of the fliers, their high mortality rate, and their heroisms in single combat. Yet for all of Yeates's concern with form, the very subject matter of Winged Victory makes it formless. The description of the gradual breakdown of the flier because of strain requires a myriad of days, the one packed against the other, each like the one before. Such monotony becomes too real even for the reader.

A sense of doom hangs over the hero precisely because the war in the air is fought on a more personal basis than that of the trenches. The superstitions of the fliers, their incessant strain, their utter dependancy on machines: each of these in turn points up the novelty of their war. But there is for Yeates, in flying, a suggestion that man's taking to the air, like his taking to war, has eternal qualities:

> It had become very familiar to Tom, this business of flying that had been so tentative and unnatural. . . . The ground fled past and sank away in its immemorial manner. There was nothing strange about it; always the earth has behaved thus; if not actually, then potentially; what was actual at one point of time being part of the texture of all time, as if the all-pervasive human mind was already familiar with the aroma of all experience of which the individual items were realizations in time of its possessions in eternity, and men seemed less to learn than to remember.[1]

Such passages make Winged Victory remarkable war fiction. The tone it sets, of the isolation of the individual in the face of life and death, liken it in mood to the literature of the nineteen-twenties, and to the other great novels of the war--those of Manning, Ford, and Mottram. All in all, it is an outstanding war novel and a fine appreciation of, a memorial to the Royal Flying Corps.

The secret service, too, has been well commemorated in prose. Spy stories share an appeal in common with detective and adventure novels, and the war offered a setting for tales of the secret service that their writers couldn't afford to overlook. John Buchan, preferring to remain "contemporary" in his "popular" fiction, wrote his two best-known spy stories[2]

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1. Ibid., p. 145.

2. The Thirty-Nine Steps and Greenmantle.

during the war itself, as did most writers of this type of literature. Somerset Maugham, however, who was altogether a much more serious novelist, wrote his book on the war after the fact. Ashenden was published in 1928 as a "narrative of some experiences during the Great War of a very insignificant member of the intelligence department."[1] Maugham did not write a fantasy of adventure and escape, but a series of loosely-connected experiences that belong to "life." They are the more interesting because they plainly display Maugham's attitude toward the craft of writing. He commented in his preface to the collected edition (1934) that the book, though founded on actual experiences, was rearranged for the purposes of fiction. He did this solely for the sake of form, because he, unlike the disciples of Chekhov, believed in plot. And plot for him meant something very specific.

> It has a beginning, a middle and an end. It is complete in itself. It starts with a set of circumstances which have consequences, but of which the causes may be ignored; and these consequences, in their turn the cause of other circumstances, are pursued till a point is reached when the reader is satisfied that they are the cause of no further consequences that need be considered. . . . /A story/ should not wander along an uncertain line, but follow, from exposition to climax, a bold and vigorous curve.[2]

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1. W. Somerset Maugham, Ashenden, (1928), from the Dedication to Gerald Kelly.

2. Maugham, Ashenden, (1934), from Preface, Collected Edition, p. vi.

Maugham felt much the same way about war as had the majority of its chroniclers, and especially the disenchanted novelists, but he was first of all writing "stories" out of his narrative, and only then commenting directly on the war itself. The material his experience in the intelligence department offered him was scrappy and pointless. Maugham's concept of the novel form apparently made a long work about his experiences impossible. But he could mould from them connected stories that were "coherent, dramatic and probable."[1] That was how he expressed himself on the war.

Ashenden's experiences, though somewhat romantic, are not pleasant or totally rewarding ones. In his small way he suffers in Switzerland and eastern Europe the brutality and horror of the second front, that of international intrigue. And his experiences are just as disturbing as anything Williamson or Aldington have described. There are the irrelevancies and the humour of war as well, and the adventure; yet the most fascinating quality of Maugham is his mastery of plot. He is a Twentieth-Century de Maupassant--in Ashenden, re-creating his experiences of a time which seemed best suited for the vast narrative or the pseudo-autobiography.

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1. Ibid., p. viii.

To be sure, some of the war stories of Montague, F. A. Voigt,[1] and others demonstrate a similar concern with "plot," but none combined both quality and technique as well as Maugham has in the very episodic Ashenden.

The third of these novels on what were the more romantic aspects of the war is even more realistic than the other two. C. S. Forester's study of a man significant to the making of history, The General, is a dispassionate examination of the personality and behaviour of a staff officer. It has been hinted that Forester had a particular individual in mind when he wrote the novel, and it is hard to believe otherwise, so acutely is the General depicted. Forester's novel is a deceptive book insomuch as the central figure is seen, not as a particular evil of the army, but as a man of ordinary potentialities. Yet, The General is a harshly condemnatory study of the products of war. This was ironically underscored upon the work's publication in 1936, for The General was an immediate success in Nazi Germany. Its large circulation there was a mystery to Forester until he discovered that it was regarded by the Nazis as a sublime deification of true militaristic spirit.

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1. C. E. Montague's Fiery Particles (1923) and F. A. Voigt's Combed Out (1929) are collections of short stories of some merit, but they lack the professional touch of Maugham.

Forester, like Maugham, is a very talented novelist, and he has fashioned his history of Lieutenant-General Sir Herbert Curzon, K.C.M.G., C.B., D.S.O., in a wonderfully ironic vein which reveals the author's own ideas on the war. The novel begins with a brief glance at Curzon as he was some years after the war, a retired figure of Bournemouth society much esteemed by the public. Then the fortunes of Curzon as a regular army officer during the Boer campaigns and afterward are sketched in. His courage and his very average mentality are made to seem responsible for his mild successes in the army. At the beginning of the war his training had admirably prepared him for the last-ditch fighting on the Marne and at Ypres, and his luck in surviving the first Ypres Battle assured him of "a future." But, his experience and ability up to then does more than to guarantee him a command position. Once he has arrived in command of a brigade, they begin to hamper his judgement of new situations. In short, Forester describes him as one of those fabled generals in the First War who saved Britain from defeat in 1914 and prevented a quicker cessation of hostilities later by refusing to accept any new ideas about the conduct of attrition warfare. His advancement in the ranks

is marked by an advancement (albeit necessary) in his callousness, until he is willing to sacrifice men solely for the preservation of his own reputation. Yet up to the German push of March, 1918, he remains a proficient soldier who holds his own with the rest of the corps' commanders. When his line is broken he breaks also, and because of the vanity of his high position, attempts a sort of Roman general's death to save his honour. Here the total irony of Forester's study comes to light, for his "ordinary fellow" has become a corrupt man destroying life, rather than saving it. Curzon's metamorphosis has been gradual. Thus, the irony is all the more superb when he is brought to the end of the war. He is never himself aware of his defeat; it has been exposed to only the reader.

The General, in fact, is a presentation of the case against the staff, which Captain B. H. Liddell Hart offered in his history, The Real War, and which was a major theme of the "war books." But it is an excellent novel as well, for its form saves it from being simply a rant, and the reality of Forester's study in personality makes The General a truly memorable book.

Though Ashenden, The General, and Winged Victory--the best works on their particular phases of the war--did not exploit

the more romantic qualities of their subject matter, this should by no means suggest that all good novels about the conflict considered only its darker side. Two novels stand out as good, romantic examinations of the First War. Both Charles Morgan's The Fountain and William McFee's Command are exceptional studies in the romance of war. It is interesting to note, however, that in both novels the conflict is a distant background against which the plots are set.

The Fountain is one of those novels in which an ethical preoccupation is combined with a vein of mysticism in a fictional plot.[1] At times it is even difficult to separate character development from moral and/or philosophical argument. The war is important in this study of a struggle toward a contemplative life, because it first affords an opportunity for the hero to withdraw from the mundane in order to seek the Socratic perfection of form, and then becomes the disrupting force in the hero's efforts to achieve his ideal.

Lewis Alison's search for the truly contemplative life is thwarted, first in prison camp by the patriotic necessity

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1. The novel received the Hawthornden Prize for 1933.

of escaping and later by a liaison with the wife of a dying Prussian officer. The prose of The Fountain is magnificent. The prison camp and the estate where Lewis and a friend are eventually paroled are beautifully described. Yet the artistic effort of Morgan gradually recedes into the background as the conflict of ideas envelops the hero. Lewis struggles with love and its consequences, and eventually it defeats, or rather tempers, the aesthetic in him. His isolated life in Holland is an unreal world which receives only occasional glimpses of the outside, as when news of the Battle of Jutland reaches the Dutch household. The war itself is not a part of this ethical involvement; it is rather a far-removed deus ex machina that forces the characters to decisions they might otherwise have avoided.

The Fountain is unique in war fiction in that it is a love story that involves very little action. One might almost call it a novel of thought. Certainly this is not what one normally associates with writings on the war. It suggests that Morgan, like every other good war novelist writing from personal experience, was prone to use the war only as he saw it, and that experience as a prisoner on parole in Holland made it possible for him to work the war into the background for a love story of the first order.

William McFee's Command is a "purer" romantic adventure. Set in the Eastern Mediterranen, it is a tale of intrigues, of international profiteers and fifth-columnists. It is in a sense a brief history of the development of a middle-aged prig into a man of some character, a story such as Conrad's Marlowe might have relished telling. In method, too, McFee seems to borrow from Conrad, for he occasionally lapses into the first person in much the same way as the narrator of Chance and Lord Jim.

The merchant service plying the routes from Greece to the Middle East offered a perfect setting for a romantic tale of the war. Salonika, still neutral and forever a part of the Eastern tradition, was a city of intrigue in the truest sense. McFee was not alone in using it as a setting. Sir Compton Mackenzie, among others, has used the same area in his Three Couriers, a tale of the experiences of a secret service agent during the 1914-18 War.[1] In Command, it is contact with the malign influence of Salonika that sends the hero, Mr. Spokesly, on his supreme adventure.

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1. Sir Compton's reminiscences of the war center around this same area, and they reflect the true romance of this front much better than his fictional accounts, or indeed better than any other record of British activities in Salonika.

Command is, in essence, a good story, but McFee's hero in the early part of the novel is too much like Kipps, and his later development into a mature figure is hampered by the former image. One never quite believes in his change. Still, the heroine of the novel, a Macedonian beauty, is one of the very few solid female characters that war fiction has produced.[1] The aura of romance she introduces into the sterile life of Mr. Spokesly infects the reader as well, until it is inevitable that all her faults be forgiven.

The novel's theme is a common one in the writing of the time. The isolation of the individual in the face of the modern world is crystallized in *Command*. For Mr. Spokesly is left a wiser but more lonely man with the realization that the only true values are those which, passing, are mourned for. He had lost fidelity and love, and was left alone to remember them. And how many times this sentiment has been echoed in the fiction of the nineteen-twenties!

Whether the novels of the war included any of epic stature is very difficult to say. National histories, or sagas, as a few authors and critics persist in terming them, had

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1. Only R. H. Mottram's Madeline of *The Spanish Farm* is a more perfectly conceived figure in the sphere of First War literature.

(and have) in modern war a natural subject for their fictional delineations of a time of crisis. Tolstoy's War and Peace is the classic example of this sort of fiction. Stendhal's Le Rouge et Le Noir is a similar chronicle in the French tradition.

In Britain Thomas Hardy had written The Dynasts, an "Epic-drama" of the Napoleonic wars that furthered intents similar to those of both Tolstoy and Stendhal. All three masterpieces are notable for characteristics which lie within the scope of the epic form. As Lascelles Ambercrombie phrased it, the epic poet has to accept, and with his genius transfigure, the general circumstance of his time. He must symbolize,

> in some appropriate form, whatever sense of the significance of life he feels acting as the unconscious metaphysic of his age. To do this, he takes some great story which has been absorbed into the prevailing consciousness of his people.[1]

These three great writers on war succeeded in this, and thereby proved the validity of a work of epic proportions on modern war. Of the three, only Hardy did not write directly in prose.

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1. Lascelles Abercrombie, The Epic, (1917), p. 39.

Further, E. M. W. Tillyard in The Epic Strain in the English Novel has pointed out that there is encouched within the precints of the English Novel a very notable epic tradition. Interestingly enough, none of the books he has discussed at length in the essay are directly concerned with the subject of national wars. There is, however, no reason why that most fitting of epic subjects should not find its way into an English prose epic.

After the 1914-18 War a great many writers seemed to be conscious of the potentials of a large work on the period, and in fact some of them may have written their novels with the intention of producing a national "saga," or work of epic proportions. That they failed to produce such a work is only too plain to see. Ford's Tietjens novels are somewhat of this category, but Ford was not intent on producing something on an all-inclusive scale. He limited himself almost solely to a concern with the moral values of a generation, and this may be to some extent why he succeeded as well as he did. John Galsworthy had the opportunity in The Forsyte Saga to deal with the war on a grand scale, yet he adroitly bypassed the chance--wisely so, considering the criticism that has been leveled at the last two novels of the trilogy.

The most notable (and the most ambitious) of those who have set about to write national history in fiction is Henry Williamson, the same writer who in the late 1920's was so violently embroiled in the "war books" controversy. In 1951 the first volume of a series of novels was published reconsidering the time of Williamson's own life. By 1959, seven more lengthy episodes have been published carrying the story up to the spring of 1918, and the tale is by no means finished.[1] The author of The Wet Flanders Plain (1929) and The Patriot's Progress (1930), by the 1950's, is capable of a much more tempered and sane view of the events of his time; yet the sensitive hero of his novels--to whom the earlier views of the author are easily ascribable--is so inept as to become boring, and the interesting reconstruction of history via very personal events is lost in the interminable embarrassments of the unreliable young man. Williamson is wonderful at re-creating the history of the time, but his central figure is a long way from the achievement of Tolstoy's Pierre Bezúkhov or of Stendhal's Julien Sorrel. This is all

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1. The series, published by Macdonald and Company, London, is to date: The Dark Lantern (1951), Donkey Boy (1952), Young Phillip Madison (1953), How Dear is Life (1954), A Fox Under My Cloak (1955), The Golden Virgin (1957), and Love and the Loveless (1958).

the more evident in the novels because one feels that Williamson's Phillip Madison is moulded after the pattern of these two heroes.

T. E. Lawrence's The Seven Pillars of Wisdom is the work nearest a true epic on the 1914-18 War.[1] Yet, the book can in no sense be termed fiction. Rather, it stands in direct relationship to Xenophon's Anabasis, being at once a personal narrative and the history of a great effort. The Renaissance insisted on taking the Anabasis for an epic, because up to the point when the Greeks reach the sea, Xenophon's history of his adventures is a true Odyssey, containing in its realities many of the qualities of epic poetry and told with an accomplished style. The Seven Pillars deserves a similar reputation today. Keyed to tragic intensity and written in beautiful, restrained prose, the narrative of the desert revolt reveals a grandeur as yet unmatched in contemporary war literature. Fiction has offered up nothing on the 1914-18 War to equal this "history of the Arab movement."

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1. T. E. Lawrence, The Seven Pillars of Wisdom, (1935), privately printed in 1926. Abridged and published under the title, Revolt in the Desert, 1927.

Attempts to achieve in a novel on the First War the epic form as well as an epic scope have been very few. David Jones's In Parenthesis is the one serious artistic effort in this direction, but it can be defined neither as a novel nor poetry.[1] As in Djuna Barnes's experimental work of the same period, Nightwood, poetic imagery and verse fragments are intertwined with prose narrative until they are inseparable. Like most innovations of this sort in literature the merits of the work are often obscured by an unfamiliar method. Because the Novel has always been the most plastic of forms, ever ready to espouse the cause of numerous hybrids and bastard children, In Parenthesis may be considered a relative at least, and as such, no study of First War literature would be complete without a consideration of it.

The work is of epic form partly because Jones worked his tale of trench warfare into a parallel with the Welsh national poem, The Gododin of Aneurin. He felt there was in the first two years of the conflict (up to the Battle of the Somme) the existence of a landscape and a code of behaviour

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1. In Parenthesis received the Hawthornden Prize for 1938.

that was embedded deep in the traditions of English literature, especially in the work of Shakespeare, Mallory, Spenser, and the epic poets of the Middle Ages.

> My companions in the war were mostly Londoners with an admixture of Welshmen, so that the mind and folk-life of those two differing racial groups are an essential ingredient to my theme. Nothing could be more representative. . . . Together they bore in their bodies the genuine tradition of the land of Britain, from Bendigeid Vran to Jingle and Marie Lloyd. These are the children of Doll Tearsheet. Those are before Caractacus was.[1]

The epic stature of the work is further strengthened by Jones's avowal that he did not intend In Parenthesis as a "war book." He wrote, "it happens to be concerned with war. I should prefer it to be about a good kind of peace--but as Mandeville says, 'of Pardys ne can I not speken propurly I was not there; it is fer beyonde and that for thinketh me. And also I was not worthi.'" The work could not have caught the magical and the humorous elements of war if it had been an anti-war tract. As it is, In Parenthesis has been able to "see formal goodness in a life singularly inimical, hateful to us."[2] Not, however, at the cost of an underlying reality.

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1. David Jones, In Parenthesis, (1937), Preface, p. x.
2. Ibid., p. xiii.

Finally, in order to better present "the complex of sights, sounds, fears, hopes, apprehensions, smells, things exterior and interior," Jones intended In Parenthesis, like epic poetry, to be read aloud. The presentation of his complexity, however, is hampered by the many annotations he felt obliged to supply. Not only has he explained his war terminology and slang usages, he has cited the sources of half-lines of older verse, and he has footnoted contexts intentionally paralleled with traditional poetry. All of these were a part of the soldiers' conscious and unconscious perceptions, but the effect of footnoting every point is to draw the reader outside experiences he ought to share with the writer. As an epic should, In Parenthesis reflects a sort of racial consciousness in action during the war. Yet, having once cited direct sources and having annotated his verse, Jones removes his reader from a direct poetic experience of the unconscious heritage of his race and offers him instead the meager fare of intricate scholarship.

To write of the 1914-18 War on an epic scale required a subject complete in itself. For the struggle in modern Europe did not cease with the armistice but was simply delayed and so created a lull between eruptions. Jones seems to have been aware of this in 1937:

> This writing is called "In Parenthesis" because I have written it in a kind of space between--I don't know between quite what--but as you turn aside to do something; and because for us amateur soldiers . . . the war itself was a parenthesis--how glad we thought we were to step outside its brackets at the end of '18--and also because our curious type of existence here is altogether in parenthesis.[1]

Jones made his epic narrative a dramatic whole by forging it within the confines of a short period before and during the Battle of the Somme. In this brief interval he managed to formulate a total experience from the Great War such as few have been able to do. His careful presentation of the war scene as a poetic adventure, as a complex of sensual experience in a "place of enchantment" which seemed, for all the new weapons, to be a reconstruction of an older heritage--it is this which makes In Parenthesis an artistic success. Ironically, it is also this hyper-concentration of reality and fancy, requiring so many annotations, which has left the work, after twenty years, an experimental oddity rather than a memorable piece of literature.

In Parenthesis offers an interesting vantage point for an examination of the extent of war literature. It is, in a sense, an exploration of the myth of battle. In developing

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1. Ibid., p. xv.

the underlying sameness of experience that is visible in the war literature of the past, Jones has hit upon the major feature of First War novels and uttered a last word on them. Their authors had shared an adventure that was old as time. When they came to write about the war, it involved not only their own personal background, but their cultural heritage as well. For no matter what far-flung field of action they described, there was for these writers "a culture already developed there, already venerable and rooted." Their work is good evidence of it.

VIII

A LAST WORD ON EFFECTS:
D. H. LAWRENCE AND VIRGINIA WOOLF

> All human relations have shifted--those between masters and servants, husbands and wives, parents and children. And when human relations change there is at the same time a change in religion, conduct, politics, and literature.
>
> Virginia Woolf, Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown

The First World War has proved a definitive gap in the literary history of Great Britain. For it was during those four years that the "forces of transition" took on a definite shape and assumed a recognizable direction. Transitional states in society, of course, require time in order to effect their changes on the thought of an age; it is not often that one may say, "Here at this exact point in time, the old ideas ceased to be valid and the new took their place." Yet the interruption in ordinary life between 1914 and 1918 may be described in these terms. The normally slow process of a nation's conforming to revolutionary philosophical, moral, social, and scientific conceptions was well under way in 1914--when it was brought to an abrupt halt. The war imposed an artificial discipline on thought, channelled the energies of its participants into a single vein, so that in the struggle for survival that followed there was precious little time for the "new," and a rejection even of much of it. Nietzsche, one of the forerunners of Twentieth-Century philosophic thought, was branded an apostle of Prussian militarism. The socialist

movement was also conveniently condemnable because of its pacifist activities. Such reactionary attitudes were largely accepted in the first two years of war, but as the fighting grew more costly and more prolonged, second thoughts about values became common. With the disillusion and relaxation of tension that came with final victory, a violent rejection of the old order was inevitable. By 1920, homage was everywhere being paid not to the traditional, but to the "new." And the shift was, for the most part, complete.

In literature this was especially true. After the war it was almost impossible for the young writer to depend on the conventions of his Edwardian uncle. Galsworthy and Bennett and Wells all had continued to produce good fiction, similar in outlook to their pre-war novels. Yet they had ceased to be examples for the young writers. Of the Edwardian masters, only Conrad could be said to have retained the respect of the novices, and he was dismissed as a possible model for other reasons. "Mr. Conrad is a Pole," one of the most prominent of the young writers had remarked, "which sets him apart, and makes him, however admirable, not very helpful."[1]

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1. Virginia Woolf, Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown, (1928), originally given as "A Paper Read to the Heretics," Cambridge, in May, 1924, p. 11.

Of the younger novelists already established before the war--only Lawrence was to achieve the adulation of scholarly critics. Yet, all of them were involved in the "transitional" spirit of their time. And though it is Dorothy Richardson, Virginia Woolf, D. H. Lawrence, and James Joyce who are now associated with experiment in the modern novel, there were similar, if less pronounced, developments in the early work of Compton Mackenzie, Gilbert Cannan, and Hugh Walpole. It was to be expected, of course, because they were young and aware of the spirit of their time. However, the war has a rather unhappy significance for the novels of these last named. By 1918 Gilbert Cannan had ceased to write, and both Mackenzie and Walpole had developed into competent, but undistinguished novelists. It would not be too unfair to suggest that by the end of the war their most influential work lay behind them. Thus, the "new," for the young writer of 1918 meant, in fact, his own generation, his contemporaries who were developing their own methods and rejecting the lessons of their elders.

How, exactly, the art of novel writing differed in 1920 from that of 1914 is not difficult to define. Of course, there were all the ingredients of post-war fiction "in the air" long before they materialized to any great extent. Arnold

Bennett, in 1910, had seen the first signs of the startling shift in method that was to come. After viewing the exhibition of "Neo-Impressionists" just opened in London, he had very perceptively written:

> I have permitted myself to suspect that supposing some writer were to come along and do in words what these men have done in paint, I might conceivably be disgusted with nearly the whole of modern fiction, and I might have to begin again. This awkward experience will in all probability not happen to me, but it might happen to a writer younger than me.[1]

Joseph Conrad had introduced impressionism into writing even before this, and his experiments with time-structure had certainly foreshadowed a great many of the literary innovations of the 1920's--though it would seem that only his literary collaborator, Ford, was aware of his achievements and able to follow them up.

This awareness of the pre-war literary world was of little interest to the daring young man of 1918, however. Like Wyndham Lewis's modern anti-hero, Tarr, he had seen enough of what he termed the "Victorian Influence" in life. That was to be battered down and rejected at all costs. New blood was needed, and it was present. James Joyce, D. H. Lawrence,

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1. Arnold Bennett, Books and Persons, (1917), p. 284.

Dorothy Richardson, and Virginia Woolf represented the new life force, the elan vitale. Not only were they sufficiently modern with their methods, but two of them (Joyce and Lawrence) had even been martyred to some extent by Edwardian society and so denied their proper attention. Now, they seemed to rise out of the ashes of the war as the very core of the "new" novel. Woolf and Richardson had made little-noticed first appearances during the war, so they could still be duly "discovered" when things were back to normal. Attention was focused on Lawrence and Joyce through the difficulty both had in finding publishers for their work. In each case the notice was more than justifiable, for these writers were working with fresh material in a fresh manner. Their new approaches did very neatly fulfill Bennett's prophecies about modern fiction.

The way in which they shaped their novels to new specifications has many facets. Essentially what they did, however, was to examine the "man inside" each of their characters, to use his unsorted impressions and to quote his uncontrolled thoughts, and by so doing to reflect the inner reality of life. Twentieth-Century psychology had opened the way for such writing. When May Sinclair adopted William James's definition of consciousness--a steady stream,

a flow of thought--to the method used by Dorothy Richardson, the new method was, in effect, named and given official sanction. Lawrence did not use the "stream of consciousness," but he was just as intent as the others on presenting the "inner man;" he found he could best do it by describing his characters in reaction against nature and by using a complexity of symbols and metaphysical terms. In other words, the photographic reality and contemporaneity of Bennett was discarded by these younger novelists in favor of a method which was more confusing for the reader, but at the same time, much less susceptible to the false supposition of a common set of values--the old ones--between the writer and his audience. With the stream of consciousness technique, and with Lawrence's metaphysical descriptions of inward experience, each value presented is a very personal one, defined the moment it appears and forgotten the moment a new one occupies the consciousness of the character.

Just after the war, such a method of presenting character and situation had a considerable advantage. By showing values to be a very personal matter, at once subjective and transient, these writers avoided the insoluble problem of discovering a common set of values with their readers. Just as the war novelist found in his subject matter the necessity

of a special morality which had to be explained to the reader, so these young writers discovered that the war had offered the coup de grace to old standards of respectability and behaviour. And when the war had ended they had further discovered that there was nothing substantial to replace the old values. Women, with greater social and economic freedom, posed a genuine problem for the moralist: what was to govern behaviour in the new, freer environment? The same question was valid for all society, for morality was, within limits, an individual matter in 1920, and that was exactly how it was treated by the experimentalists. It took some time for society to settle down, and until it did, the novelist was faced with the task of writing without the benefit of a standard common to all his readers.

This unstable state had been some time in developing, of course, but it was indisputable that the breakdown of the old order was nearly complete in 1918:

> Things fall apart; the center cannot hold;
> Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world,
> The blood-dimmed tide is loosed, and everywhere
> The ceremony of innocence is drowned;
> The best lack all conviction, while the worst
> Are full of passionate intensity.[1]

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1. W. B. Yeats, "The Second Coming," The Collected Poems of W. B. Yeats, (1955), pp. 210-11, (written in 1921).

The author, faced with this sort of situation and fully sensitive to its implications, had several alternatives in taking from it his fiction. He could evolve a method of expressing coherently individual, rather than "standard," values and use them as the background for his work, as Lawrence, Wbolf, Joyce, and Richardson did; he could find within his society-in-transition an artificial state that supplied a strict and definable moral code for its members, such as the war novelists in general did when they re-created for the reader war-time experience; he could concern himself with describing the transitional state itself by using the change or breakdown in values for subject matter, as Ford Madox Ford had done in his Tietjens novels; or he could ignore the problem completely by removing his story from the sphere of normal society, the method employed by Walter de la Mare in his very fine Memoirs of a Midget. The last alternative was rarely adopted by the post-war novelists. The most successful of them succeeded in coming to terms with their own time.

The significance of the war for these young writers has been discussed in some of their work, and it is here that one may most accurately trace the effects of the conflict on

them. For the war did tend to accentuate in the experience of the individual those very qualities of life that the post-war novelist was most concerned with.

Virginia Woolf and D. H. Lawrence both wrote "war books" of a sort. That is, they employed the war directly and indirectly in fiction, although only within the confines of their own actual experience as civilians. Woolf is especially interesting in this light because it was during the war that she evolved her ideas about modern fiction. Jacob's Room (1922) was not only, in Winifred Holtby's words, "as much a war book as Death of a Hero;"[1] it also represented her first attempt to embody in a full-length novel her conception of modern writing. In her collection of short sketches, Monday or Tuesday, written in 1919-20, she had worked out her ideas on the flux of experience. David Daiches saw these stories as an attempt at finding a "way of writing which would interpret events as it described them, show both the thing and its value, its metaphysical meaning, simultaneously."[2] Jacob's Room is a full-length

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1. Winifred Holtby, Virginia Woolf, (1932), p. 116.
2. David Daiches, Virginia Woolf, (1945), p. 45.

application of this sort of coming to grips with reality, and it emphasizes Woolf's revolt from the conventional mode of fiction.

The novel is intentionally plotless; it is too much concerned with character to be burdened with a plot. This is especially interesting in view of the subject matter of the novel. Jacob's life covers that same span that so many of the disenchanted war novelists tried to work into fiction. H. M. Tomlinson in All Our Yesterdays and Richard Aldington in Death of a Hero had both traced the history of young men destined to die in the war, and there is in their efforts a hint of real difficulty in producing a plot. The trials of a youth in either an unsettled or an idyllic time (in 1918, the two divergent views of the Edwardian era) and his unjust, his meaningless, early death don't seem too easily put into well-plotted fiction. Where Tomlinson and Aldington stumbled, however, Virginia Woolf had simply refused to step. Her vision of life as a sort of dynamic formlessness brought her to ignore plot in Jacob's Room. Her reality was not in the "pattern in the carpet," but in the individual insights which follow one on the other and are knitted into the making-up of consciousness. The instants in space-time crystallized in Jacob's Room are

not interlocked to form a plot as they are in Ford's Tietjens novels; they are almost too separate, as though they were the record of a schizophrenic's vision of life, the result of a too-short attention span and a mind that only with difficulty could associate simple ideas. Scene after scene is flashed--in terms of actual visual imagery--in front of the reader, while the only connecting link is Jacob. It is part of Virginia Woolf's philosophy.

> In any case life is but a procession of shadows, and God knows why it is that we embrace them so eagerly, and see them depart with such anguish, being shadows.[1]

The war is a deus ex machina that proves her point, that comes along to mock at life's pointlessness. In its first appearance in the novel, the Great War is introduced in an ironic aside on the folly of human pretensions, and it serves as an omen of Jacob's own future.

> Rose Shaw, talking in rather an emotional manner to Mrs. Bowley at Mrs. Durrant's evening party a few nights back, said that life was wicked because a man called Jimmy refused to marry a woman called (if memory serves) Helen Aitken. . . . Bowley saw what was up--asked Jimmy to breakfast. Helen must have confided to Rose. For my own part, I find it exceedingly difficult to interpret songs without words. And now Jimmy feeds crows in Flanders and Helen visits hospitals. Oh, life is damnable, life is wicked, as Rose Shaw said.[2]

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1. Virginia Woolf, Jacob's Room, (1922), p. 115.

2. Ibid., pp. 156-57.

From this point onwards the war is in the background of the novel as a sort of final reckoning for its hero. Toward the end of the work it emerges into the stream of lives around him. August 2nd, 1914, reveals itself, and with it comes the infringement of the outside world upon Jacob's destiny. Finally war time, with its brief glimpses of half-remembered, never-to-be-seen-again faces in uniform, its crossing and recrossing of life's slender filaments, is carefully illuminated, and with that Jacob disappears in the crowd. Clara Durrant catches one such glimpse, as does the Reverend Andrew Floyd, and then he is gone.

It is Jacob Flanders' (one wonders at the significance of his last name) final impression on the world with which Virginia Woolf was most concerned. It was that which she was trying to record. And Jacob's Room underscores the fact that Jacob was, at best, a memory for some few people, forever receding in time. His only "reality" was in the several impressions garnered together in the novel.

In later works--in fact, in her next novel, Mrs. Dalloway, (1925)--Virginia Woolf was to pay more attention to the problem of plot, but it is unfair to suppose that Jacob's Room suffers from its structure. Rather, it came to terms with its subject matter in a way that was much more successful than that of

similar works by Aldington and Tomlinson. Her method, like that used by Ford and others groping to "write of their own time in terms of their own time," came very close to the true spirit of the period. Her revelations of "reality" belonged to the same zeitgeist that adopted Bergson's concepts of duration and involved in its makeup the psychological studies of Freud and Jung. More than that, the war made everyone much more aware of mortality, of the temporal nature of existence, and this was what her new method of writing reflected. One has to deny, however, that her work and the experiments of James Joyce and D. H. Lawrence introduced the way into "one of the great ages of English literature," as she suggested in her essay, Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown (1924). The novel has always been the most fluid of forms, and the extremes of such works as Jacob's Room have, in the end, not so much pointed the way to a new and better novel, as they have created for later novelists a broader field of writing that readers have been conditioned to accept.

In this way the Georgians of the inter-war period shifted the literary scene from its Edwardian state. Yet Virginia Woolf, like the Great War, must not receive too

much credit for the "new" ideas of form introduced into Georgian literature. Her contribution was by no means decisive. It has even been argued by her harsher critics that her discovery of a new sort of sensibility was no "deeper revelation than that of a kind of mental sickness, the sort of jumble that people have in their heads when they are going under or emerging from an anaesthetic."[1]

D. H. Lawrence, too, wrote about the war from a strange vantage point. He hadn't suffered from a long illness and period of depression during the war as had Woolf, but his contradictory nature and the persecution it attracted during the four years were more than enough to have forced upon him a grim realization of the struggle.[2] His books, even after the war, continued to meet with publication difficulties, and his experiences with bureaucracy from 1916 to 1919 had confirmed his worst impressions of England. He had left his country in November, 1919, but not the memories of his experience in the last

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1. Frank Swinnerton, The Georgian Literary Scene, (1935), p. 392.

2. See above, Chapter III, pp. 69-78.

years. They were a canker to him, and in 1922 he introduced them rather awkwardly into his political novel, Kangaroo.

The novel is particularly interesting because it presents a prototype of the sort of attitude the war and modern civilization fostered in the inter-war years. David Daiches has perceptively labelled the theme for modern novels in general to be "the relation between loneliness and love."[1] In Kangaroo this theme is developed in Lawrence's usual very personal terms. The individual of the novel is Lawrence; it could be no one else. As in The Rainbow and Women in Love--the two works he completed during the war years--Kangaroo offers its readers the conception of man rejecting the large society and its problems (political and emotional) for an inward struggle that might make possible the mystic "oneness" with another individual or small group. In that sense Kangaroo, too, is an honest reflection of Lawrence's difficulties as they arose out of his war-time experience. Circumstance had barred him from participating in the conflict, had set him further apart from his fellow men than even his temperament

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1. David Daiches, The Present Age after 1900, (1958), p. 86.

had; and Lawrence had discovered a philosophy in the problem of making contact with the external world.

In Kangaroo three of the main figures are the embodiments of mass values. Opposed to them is Lawrence, the individual, unable to accept their macrocosmic views in place of his microcosm. H. G. Wells might well have developed such a theme, but where he would have made his novel a sociological tract, analysing in turn the respective merits of each point of view, Lawrence was content to portray his hero as rejecting instinctively the mass credos of both socialism and Fascism as a menace to the sanctity of the individual. His hero looks within himself for his truths and tries to create around him the small society, the "in-group," in preference to accepting the cause of an ideology dependent on society in the mass.

Not unlike the more bitter war novelists, Lawrence seemed to argue that the new mass values which appeared to govern society in the machine age were a perversion of man's nature, a destructive force rather than a creative one. In fact, this sentiment was echoed again and again in the inter-war years, just as loudly as the opposite view of engagée fiction that only in politics could man achieve

his final destiny. Virginia Woolf, James Joyce, Dorothy Richardson, Ford Madox Ford--all these "moderns" concerned themselves with portraying the basic isolation of the individual and his efforts to escape from it by love or any other means.

In Kangaroo the part the war played in the development of such a theme is emphasized by the author. The novel's twelfth chapter, "The Nightmare," is a flashback to the hero's life in England during the war years. It interrupts the chronological flow of the novel at a critical point--just when a crisis between the two opposing forces (socialism and Fascism) that vie for the attention of Richard Somers is imminent. Why Lawrence introduces this very accurate reproduction of his own experiences in Cornwall is not difficult to understand. It creates an image of Richard Somers that is incompatible with his acceptance of any cause larger than himself or that of the select group of friends around him. The unjust persecution of Lawrence, and of Kangaroo's hero, was caused by the same sort of herd instinct that both socialism and Fascism depended upon.

> Somers tiresomely belonged to no group. He would not enter the army, because his profoundest instinct was against it. Yet he had no conscientious objection to war. It was the whole spirit of the war, the vast mob-spirit, which he could never acquiesce in. The terrible, terrible war, made so fearful because in every country practically every man lost his head, and lost his own centrality, his own manly isolation in his own integrity, which alone keeps life real.[1]

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1. D. H. Lawrence, Kangaroo, (1923), p. 239.

The war, then, had forced upon Somers a consciousness of his isolation in a world gone mad, and with that realization had come a vision of returning soldiers as bereft of their inner pride, "inwardly lost." When in Australia a few years later, Somers is faced with forces similar to those awakened in the masses by the war, it is inevitable that he should reject them again, and precisely because he has seen the cost the individual must pay for supporting the values of the masses. Kangaroo goes on to develop this theme, and to interweave with it a sexual mystique concerning the relationship of the individual in isolation to his few attempts at an intimacy with others. This was not as unique as Lawrence's admirers were prone to believe. Ford's Tietjens had struggled with a similar isolation, as had the heroes of Manning and Mottram, among others. They too were cut off from their normal society and immersed by the war into a more isolated one. And their experience caused them to suffer an isolation as intense as any that Lawrence or his hero, Somers, had suffered in Cornwall. Army life had negated for them the civilian group values that they had paid at least "lip-service" to in pre-war England. When they had returned after the war they seemed to find that all human

relations had indeed shifted; to some extent it explained the sense of isolation that they felt.

Lawrence, too, was occupied in both Women in Love, written during the war, and in Kangaroo, his "war novel," with something that suggests quite strongly the comradeship of the soldiers that the soldier-writers attempted very hard to express. Until Kangaroo, Lawrence's ideas about the establishment of a Blutbrüdershaft with another man were not resolved in fiction. In this work a very physical/metaphysical love is forced upon his hero, Somers, by the humanity-loving Fascist leader of the ex-soldiers. Somers finds he is unable to accept it--perhaps because it is nothing like the idyllic friendship with a Cornish farmer which he remembers as his one pleasant experience during the war years. His only answer to this sudden revelation of his isolation is to leave Australia and the unsuccessful intimacies for a new world.

The effect of this is to emphasize an attitude that was very much a part of English post-war fiction. Somers' last reflections on his experience in Australia bring it out very clearly:

> Sydney, and the warm harbour. They crossed over once more in the blue afternoon. Kangaroo dead. Sydney lying on its many-lobed blue harbour, in the Australian spring. The many people, all seeming dissolved in the blue air. Revolution--nothingness. Nothing could ever matter.[1]

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1. Ibid., p. 399.

This evaluation of experience is an obvious repetition of the theme of disillusion, of the meaninglessness of life. It was a view that, in 1922, he held in common with a great many writers.

The less unique, but more representative, literary figures of the post-war era, Aldous Huxley, Noel Coward, and Rose Macaulay, were gifted with a bright wit to temper their cynicism, but pessimistic they remained (at least in those first years after 1918), like Lawrence, forlorn because, "Nothing could ever matter." It isn't surprising, again because the general tenor of the last two years of the war had furthered such a mood. Bennett's The Pretty Lady had been characteristic of that time, and the novels of the writers growing up during the war were to describe their world along similar lines. However, to say how much the novel not written about the war, but about the post-war world, was influenced by the conflict is impossible. In all probability, such influence could have come only from the war's effects on society itself. And, as has been pointed out, things had changed a great deal after the four years, for literature and for society.

One feels that both Woolf and Lawrence produced representative attitudes in their "war books," attitudes

which were repeated in varying degree by most of the writers still young enough to be malleable material for the registering of their own time in terms of their own time. In contrast, the war seemed to change little for those men well set in their conceptions, but then that is the way it has always been. It is the young who are forever capable of believing they are different, willing to admit it. And perhaps the post-war world was so changed in Britain because its young were for the first time in a position to voice with some authority their ideas and complaints.

IX

CONCLUSION

One must be wary of any generality about the effects of the First World War upon literature. There is no statement about this intriguing relationship between a very tangible event and the generation of writers involved in it which can hope to be any more than an approximation of the truth. Yet all too often in criticism on modern fiction, the war itself tends to become a convenient causative factor that is never fully explained but always implicit in the development of the modern novel. The most recent of the paragraph summaries by a literary critic of the war's effect on society and fiction is a fair example of this:

> The catastrophe of the First World War not only altered society, it affected men's sensibilities as they had not previously been affected in modern times. The catastrophe brought into modern soceity a sense of urgency and a new tempo; it made for a new consciousness of self and of the place of the self in society; it created an atmosphere in which the loss of old certainties, the presence of new anxieties, and the thrusting forward of public issues combined to isolate man from man and group from group. The novelist promptly discovered that new techniques were required to express the new fragmentation of society.[1]

Such comment is interesting evidence of the sociological mystique which has become an accepted part of criticism on

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1. John McCormick, Catastrophe and Imagination, (1957), p. 41.

contemporary literature, but it offers no fair representation of the war's effects, or even an accurate interpretation of one phase of its effects on the novel. Something more is needed to express this relationship, at least as it actually exists in the literature of the war. For a tangible record of the war's impact is available in the novels on the conflict, while its effects on society, as they are reflected in literature, remain speculative and clouded over with generalizations of a sociological nature.

What has been set out in this study has been intended not as an investigation of the novel and the war which should conveniently fit into a much larger schematization of Twentieth-Century literature, but as an objective probing of the material that is directly concerned with the war. Examined in this way, the novels that appeared during and after the conflict suggest several things that are of interest to the literary historian, but they do not display solely one trend or tendency that might be equated with the growth of "tradition" in the novel. This has generally been "read into" examinations of the period, at the cost of neglecting other equally true facets of the novel-war relationship.

The novel by 1914 had already witnessed the beginning of that experimentation in method and subject matter which

has come to characterize the outstanding work of the first three decades of the century. Novelists in attempting to come to terms with the thought of their own time had begun to use new approaches to their subjects. In fact, one of the great experimental novels of the Twentieth Century was published in 1904. Joseph Conrad's Nostromo employed techniques that were to become a recognized part of the novel, and his material was germain not only to the time it was written but to the events that were to follow. An overt concern with contemporaneity was also noticeable in the Edwardian novelists, though it did not reach the pitch in their works that was to be attained during the war. Thus, the international strife came at a time when literature was undergoing the first throes of its revolution. And the most immediate effect of the actual hostilities was to put a sudden and very artificial halt to this process of change.

During the war years public sentiment seemed to go through three distinct phases; and as could have been expected once the novelists, both "popular" and "literary," settled down to the catastrophe, literature witnessed these moods as well. The first phase, extending more or less from the outbreak of hostilities to the rather futile Battle of Loos was characterized by the enthusiasm of young men like Julien Grenfell and Rupert Brooke, and in novels was represented

solely in "popular" fiction. John Hay Beith's The First Hundred Thousand stands out as the best of these novels; in it one can find as good a reflection of those first months of war as is available. What followed Loos may be described as a period of gestation during which the significance of a prolonged world war was pressed home to the whole of British society. Novels on the war retained in general a journalistic approach to the subject--as indeed they had to--but not necessarily at the cost of their literary merit, as Hugh Walpole demonstrated in The Dark Forest. It was during this period, lasting to the end of the Somme campaign, that almost every writer in Britain found himself personally involved in the effects of war. For D. H. Lawrence, Gilbert Cannan, and others it meant persecution and humiliation, while for men like Ford Madox Ford and Sir Compton Mackenzie it was the opportunity of a lifetime. Whatever its significance, however, it had become a very tangible and unavoidable experience. After the Somme a great many people began to voice doubts as to the sanity of the struggle with Germany. Enormous losses made the public aware of shortcomings in the Allied war machine, and the incapacity of the generals to produce any more than monotonous and futile frontal assaults on the Western Front even made it doubtful at times that the war

could be won. The effects of trench warfare began to show on the troops as well, and from among their ranks poets began to speak out in a vein that was very much akin to that of the pacifists. In France this tendency was even more pronounced. The initial "realistic" war fiction had come from French writers and from that same source the British public had in 1917 its first opportunity to examine a novel (in translation) that presented war as it was to the line soldier. Barbusse's Le Feu was followed by Arnold Bennett's The Pretty Lady, a rather cynical study of war-time society which was in its way as negative as anything this third phase, of disillusion with the war, had produced in Britain. And it was nearly as good as the French masterpiece of the war.

It was on this note that the war ended. Victory was a cause for a great sigh of relief and a grand celebration, but the seeds of disenchantment had been sown and in the years after the war they were to blossom into a considerable literary movement.

The nineteen-twenties produced many war novels, and it is from this period that the best and most thought-provoking English works on the conflict came. Three war novels were written in this period which are among the best works of the Twentieth Century. Ford Madox Ford's Tietjens trilogy, The Spanish Farm Trilogy of R. H. Mottram, and Frederick Manning's

Her Privates We are also the fairest representation of the conflict that is available in fiction, and in this respect they point up the major weakness of the considerable literature of disenchantment that the war and its after-effects brought forth. For the mass of publications which precipitated the "war books" controversy of 1929-30 tended generally to produce a distorted vision of the war. The disillusioned authors of these works seemed more intent on protesting against the injustices of their society than in creating memorable literature, with the result that the quality of their novels suffered. Nevertheless, the novels of the disenchanted school remain an important facet of the novel's history. They are the characteristic fiction of the nineteen-twenties.

In examining the extent of war literature it becomes quite clear that post-war fiction about the conflict was not limited to novels by disillusioned writers. As may be seen in the short biographies of a few authors given in the appendix, the war stimulated a variety of responses which were as contradictory as human experience itself. Subject matter and form varied just as much for a world war offered ample scope for both. Yet no epic came out of the fiction on the war. The most successful attempt in this direction, David Jones's In Parenthesis, did point out the

universality of experience in battle for every generation and thus established the validity of an epic on the First World War, but his work remains just another experimental oddity in an age of experimentation.

Finally, it is evident that the inward-turning tendency of modern writing for which the 1914-18 upheaval has received so much credit was in fact encouraged by the experience of the war. A sense of the individual's isolation in the contemporary world is one common theme running through the three best works on the conflict (among others), just as it is a major theme in the war novels of D. H. Lawrence and Virginia Woolf. However, one must not forget that the war itself may be classified as simply one facet of the modern industrial society which first engendered such attitudes; because of this it is impossible to accurately evaluate the significance for the novel of the changes in society which it brought about. That must wait for a time that has seen the consummation of those convolutions in Europe that began in 1914.

APPENDIX A

TABLE OF PUBLISHING FIGURES
1911-1920

BOOK PUBLISHING FIGURES FOR THE YEARS 1911 THROUGH 1920

	--Fiction--			--Other Publications-- Pamphlets not included			--Totals--			
Year	New Books	New Editions	Trans-lations	New Books	New Editions	Trans-lations	New Books	New Editions	Trans-lations	Grand Total
1911	1,234	933	40	6,434	1,451	150	7,668	2,384	190	10,242
1912	1,358	1,055	48	6,915	1,815	171	8,273	2,870	219	11,362
1913	1,226	1,220	57	7,399	1,618	201	8,625	2,838	258	11,721
1914	1,014	1,066	30	6,911	1,608	168	7,925	2,674	198	10,797
1915	843	816	33	6,717	1,350	140	7,560	2,166	172	9,899
1916	952	844	30	5,213	768	53	6,225	1,612	83	7,920
1917	786	731	20	4,930	794	88	5,716	1,525	108	7,349
1918	755	237	22	5,333	729	72	6,088	966	94	7,148
1919	831	339	46	5,101	956	163	5,932	1,295	209	7,436
1920	985	1,051	53	6,976	1,215	161	7,461	2,266	214	9,941

The effect of the war on the book trade can easily be seen in the table.

APPENDIX B

WAR-TIME ACTIVITIES OF REPRESENTATIVE AUTHORS

RICHARD ALDINGTON
(1892-1942)

There is no better example of the sort of experience that led to the formation of the "disillusioned" school of war fiction than is traceable in the life of Richard Aldington. When the European war began he was already established in the avant garde literary coterie that centered around the Egoist magazine and its Imagist poets. In 1913 he had been appointed literary editor of the magazine, and with his marriage to Hilda Doolittle, his associations with the group became even firmer.

Aldington enlisted as a private in the infantry in 1916, later becoming an officer and thus following a military career that is strikingly parallel to that of the central figure in his novel, Death of a Hero. He was demobilized soon after the armistice, but the effects of his experience were to remain with him for some time. Like many other returning veterans he suffered from neurasthenia, which brought on periodic nervous collapses. Between 1919 and 1929 his relations with former intimates were severely strained, and he knew periods of extreme poverty. There can be little doubt that his active-service and post-war experiences coloured his work for the rest of his life. Only

in 1929 was he able to express his feelings as they arose out of the years between 1916 and the 1920's; there is little in the literature of the war that is as vindictive as Death of a Hero. Aldington was truly a prototype of the disillusioned of the lost generation. In the biographical sketch published in Twentieth Century Authors, it is aptly remarked:

> His own experiences had given him an immense store of psychological hatred and anger, which were spitted out freely in his early novels. Because he loved his native country so deeply, he chastised it bitterly.

Principal publications concerning the war:

Images of War (poetry), 1918.

Death of a Hero (novel), 1929.

Roads to Glory (short stories), 1930.

JOHN HAY BEITH ("Ian Hay")
(1876-1952)

At the outbreak of the war, Beith, a Fettes College, Edinburgh, schoolmaster, was already established as a writer of popular fiction. He volunteered for service immediately, and was commissioned in the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders, 9th Division. The experience that was to follow with "The First Hundred Thousand," as the original volunteers were called, went into the writing of Beith's novel of the same

name. Although he had no contract for the publication of his adventures in the New Army, he began sending articles to Blackwood's Magazine. They were an immediate success, and it was these articles which became the novel. It also met favour quickly. Beith followed it with two more such novels, neither of which, however, can be compared with The First Hundred Thousand.

His war career was a successful one by any standard. He was mentioned in dispatches, won the Military Cross, and in 1918 was made a C.B.E. The last two years of the war Beith spent in America as a sort of liaison officer. His book, The Last Million, was a propagandist effort deriving from this assignment.

After the war Beith settled down into a remunerative literary life comparable to that of Cyril Macneile ("Sapper").

Principal publications concerning the war:

The First Hundred Thousand (novel), 1915.

Carrying On--After the First Hundred Thousand (novel), 1917.

The Last Million (propaganda), 1919.

ARNOLD BENNETT
(1867-1931)

Bennett has been considered essentially a pre-war novelist because he is much more easily pigeon-holed into Edwardian than

post-war literature. This is an untrue assumption, however, for his work both during and after the conflict is quite good and of equal interest.

Though he was too old for active service, he was quickly absorbed into the war. Frank Swinnerton, in The Georgian Literary Scene, saw him drawn into the struggle "as husband (for Mrs. Bennett, being French was at once tragically agitated by the fate of her country), as journalist, and finally as an active force in the Ministry of Information (or Propaganda), to the directorship of which he was in the end appointed." He became involved in a fast-moving life among politicians and society, one he had never before experienced, and its most immediate effects were to lessen his detachment in literature. He was transformed into a public oracle of sorts, and it is this which has led critics to assume his later works are of poorer quality.

The war did leave Bennett physically exhausted after his strenuous exertions for the Allied cause, but it did not deprive him of his literary vision. No work has captured better the note of war-time disillusion, degeneration, and despondency than The Pretty Lady, and his post-war

novels, Lord Rango, Riceyman Steps, and Imperial Palace certainly show no diminution of his talents.

Principal publications on the war:

Liberty: A Statement of the British Case (propaganda), 1914.

The Roll Call (novel), 1917.

The Pretty Lady (novel), 1918.

EDMUND BLUNDEN
(1896-)

Edmund Blunden left Christ's Hospital, London, to enter the army in 1916. He served in the Royal Sussex Regiment, attaining the rank of lieutenant. His duty overseas was confined to the Western Front, where he was gassed and also received the Military Cross. Upon demobilization he finished his university education at Oxford and spent the next few years traveling abroad because of illness.

Blunden was the calmest of the group of war poets with which he is associated. Unlike Graves, Sassoon, and Owen, he viewed the war from a more or less detached perspective. As a result his very poetic reminiscences of the Western Front offer the best description that is available of the last stages of the trench fighting.

Principal publications on the war:

De Bello Germanico (autobiography), 1930.

Undertones of War (prose and verse), 1928.

GILBERT CANNAN
(1884-1955)

One of the four promising young writers that were cited as such in 1914 by Henry James, Cannan was not unlike D. H. Lawrence in his fortunes both before and during the war.

In 1909 Cannan was the personal secretary to James Barrie. His subsequent acquaintanceship with the playwright's wife led to a strong liaison and an eventual scandal of sorts. She divorced Barrie and married Cannan and the couple moved into a full life within the narrow confines of the avant garde literati.

Cannan was a pacifist of sorts, subject to the same manic moods as Lawrence, and as undecided about his allegiances during the conflict. As the war progressed, however, he became of more and more unsound mind, and his writing began to suffer from his unsettled mental condition. Whether his difficulties were incurred chiefly as a result of the strain war-time conditions created is impossible to say. But there are in his life striking similarities with the experiences of a great many of the creative intellects of his age, similarities which suggest Cannan as a prototype of the artist's dilemma in the first two decades of the Twentieth Century.

The war certainly tended to bring to the foreground Cannan's already developing schizoid tendencies, and after three years of struggling with pacifism, its attendant persecutions, and suffering from marital difficulties, Cannan is said to have suffered a complete breakdown. Shortly after the war he gave up writing and was legally declared insane.

Principal publications concerning the war:

Pugs and Peacocks (novel), 1917.

Sembal (novel), 1918.

The Anatomy of Society (essay), 1919.

Freedom (essay), 1917.

JOSEPH CONRAD
(1857-1924)

When the war began Conrad and his family had only just arrived at Cracow, Poland, which the author hadn't seen since his childhood. Rather than risk being caught between two armies in some German town, Conrad took his family to a resort in Poland where he had relatives and from there worked to get them back to England. After two months as a refugee, he obtained permission to travel to Vienna, and from there to Italy. The Austrian authorities almost succeeded in detaining

him for the duration of the war, but the Conrads were in Italy before they could be stopped. Upon their return to England, Conrad's elder son enlisted and was commissioned as a subaltern in the Royal Artillery.

Conrad himself was greatly distressed at being unable to contribute to the war effort. But just when he was most depressed by it, the Admiralty invited him, as a journalist, to visit several stations and get an idea of the duties of the Volunteer Reserve. This was his only experience with the waging of war, however, and as he had become more and more absorbed with the past, there was no reflection of any of his war-time experiences in his novels. It should be remembered that Conrad was sixty in 1917, and in poor health throughout the war years. Such writings on the war as he did produce were published in the form of essays in Notes on Life and Letters, (1921).

WILFRED EWART
(1892-1923)

Wilfred Ewart accepted a commission in the Scots Guards just after the war began. He arrived in France in February, 1915. At the Battle of Neuve Chapelle a month later he was wounded and returned to England. He was back in France before

the year was out, spending the next six months in and out of the trenches on the Ypres salient, and then moving down to the Somme for the 1916 offensive. Late in the year he was again invalided home after a severe case of enteritis. Some months later he again returned to the front just in time to take part in the third Battle of Ypres. In May of the next year Ewart was appointed to the staff. His good fortune was not permanent, however; a bout of trench fever put him in the hospital, and upon his release he was returned to his division at the front. In short, Wilfred Ewart's career in the army was not unlike that of quite a few of his contemporaries-at-arms. Immediately after his demobilization, he began the novel which was to become The Way of Revelation. He had only just completed it when he was accidently shot dead on New Year's Eve, 1923, in Mexico City.

Principal publications on the war:

The Way of Revelation (novel), 1922.

Scots Guard (autobiography), 1934.

FORD MADOX FORD
(1867-1939)

The history of Ford's war-time adventures make as interesting reading as any of the novels published on the

time. He began by being questioned as a possible German agent, the result, Ford believed, of Violet Hunt's indiscretions. But matters were soon righted, and before 1914 was over, he was offered the opportunity of using his literary talents for the Allied cause. When Blood is Their Argument and Between St. Denis and St. George were good propagandist pieces and they helped a great deal to rectify his reputation as an Englishman--before the war Ford had made claims to a barony in Germany and had openly admitted his pretensions.

In August, 1915, Ford enlisted in the Welsh Regiment and was commissioned as a second lieutenant. In a sense, the war was a blessing for him, offering as it did an escape from a distasteful and unhappy relationship with Violet Hunt. But the patriotism of Ford should not be forgotten because of these personal problems. He was 47 when he enlisted and safe from any pressure that might have been put on him to take part in the war.

Ford was immensely pleased with his commission in a line regiment and he dived into the work with the zeal of the young men of the first hundred thousand volunteers whom Beith has made famous.

He reached France in July, 1916, and went into action the same month. His health failed, however, and he was back in Wales on depot duty within two months. From here his experiences pretty well follow the pattern of his Tietjens novels. He suffered shell-shock and was troubled severely with his lungs but managed to last the war out. The total effects of the war on Ford are not too difficult to estimate. Douglas Goldring has ably phrased it in The Last Pre-Raphaelite.

> In the light of the Tietjens novels, on which he embarked five years after his demobilization, we may at least hazard a guess that his war service compensated him for many of the humiliations to which he had been subjected since his wife abandoned her divorce proceedings. It restored his pride, his belief in himself, while, at the same time, increasing his view that society owed him as a reward for his services, as it owed to all his comrades-in-arms, the right to live his own life, immune from civilian criticism.

Principal publications on the war:

When Blood Is Their Argument: An Analysis of Prussian Culture (propagandist essay), 1915.

Between St. Denis and St. George: A Sketch of Three Civilizations (propagandist essay), 1915.

On Heaven and Poems Written on Active Service, 1918.

Some Do Not (novel), 1924.

No More Parades (novel), 1925.

A Man Could Stand Up (novel), 1926.

SIR ALAN PATRICK HERBERT
(1890-)

Like almost all the war novelists, Sir Alan used his actual experience as a basis for the plot of his war novel, The Secret Battle. He had just graduated from New College, Oxford, when the war began, and he enlisted immediately in the Royal Naval Division. He went through the Gallipoli campaign and afterwards served in France. In Gallipoli he was mentioned in dispatches. His active service came to an end in the last year of the war when he was severely wounded and invalided out of the service. His novel, The Secret Battle, was perhaps the first really competent English novel to be written about the war by a soldier who had seen active service.

Principal work concerning the war:

The Secret Battle (novel), 1920.

D. H. LAWRENCE
(1885-1930)

No writer was less certain than Lawrence as to what his attitude to the war really was. He may even be seen as a prototype of the confused and uncommitted of his generation, whose

> . . . native hue of resolution
> Is sicklied o'er with the pale cast of thought

Lawrence was never quite sure what he, the artist, should do about the war, and even at those odd times when he was forced to consider the problem he was able only to rationalize on first one side and then the other. His wife's German origin increased their difficulties, and it was this as much as Lawrence's own strange behaviour which eventually caused their forced eviction from the cottage in Cornwall, and the ensuing bitter poverty.

The poet was unfit for any military service and hence free from the jibes of the professional patriots, but this did not stop him from openly supporting first the cause of the militarists, then of the pacifists. His attitude changed with his moods, even after his humiliations at the conscription centers where he was examined. And it was this irresolution as much as anything else which perpetuated his misery during the four years, for it excluded him from the comforts and friendships of either camp. Though the pacifists were organized only in the very general sense of the word, they did manage to help one another through their trials, and one wonders if Lawrence wouldn't have been taken under their wing if he had been willing to compromise himself. But he wasn't.

After the banning of The Rainbow in 1915 he was even further isolated from his former benefactors and friends. Everything that happened to him during the war, it seems, conspired to complete his isolation. This is exactly the quality his novel on the period, Kangaroo, gives to that time, and it is not unfair to say that the main effect of the war on Lawrence's work was to further the tendency toward an inward turning, a highly concentrated examination of self rather than of the contemporary world.

Principal works concerning the war:

England, My England (short stories), 1924.

Kangaroo (novel), 1923.

SIR COMPTON MACKENZIE
(1882-)

Sir Compton was well established as a novelist when the war began, being one of the four young authors that were singled out by Henry James in 1914 as most promising. In September, 1914, he was engaged in completing the second volume of Sinister Street, his best novel. He completed this in Italy and then returned to take a commission in the Royal Marines. He served on the staff of Ian Hamilton during the Gallipoli campaign, and afterwards was appointed military

control officer in Athens. In 1917 he became director of the Aegean Intelligence Service. His activities in this area offered him one of the most romantic settings that the war had to offer, and he was to exploit this experience in several novels after the war.

He was several times decorated for his exploits, receiving the French Legion of Honour, the Serbian White Eagle, the Greek Redeemer Medal, and an O. B. E. in the course of his service.

Principal publications concerning the war:

Gallipoli Memories (non-fiction), 1929.

Greek Memories (non-fiction), 1939.

Aegean Memories (non-fiction), 1940.

The Three Couriers (novel), 1929.

The South Wind of Love (novel), 1937.

C. E. MONTAGUE
(1867-1928)

In 1914 Montague somehow managed to get himself accepted for service in the 24th Battalion of the Royal Fusiliers. He was 47, a man of considerable literary reputation, and a not unrecognized journalist; yet such was his feeling that he enlisted as a private. During duty as an instructor in grenade throwing, he was severely injured about the face and

hands. When he finally did get to France in November, 1915, he was still weak from his mishap and was marked, to his dismay, for permanent base duty. But Montague was a determined man and just after his 49th birthday succeeded in getting to the trenches as a sergeant. After a few short weeks his health broke and he was permanently invalided from the front line duty. The experience of war in the trenches was his, however, and he was to use it to the best possible advantage in the years that were to follow.

The abortive tour in the trenches was not the end of Montague's war service, however. He applied for and received a commission in the Intelligence during his convalescence, and for the next two years served in a capacity befitting his talents. It is fair to say that he saw the war during the four years from almost every position. This partly accounts for the veracity of his very excellent study, Disenchantment.

Principal publications on the war:

Disenchantment (non-fiction), 1923.

Fiery Particles (short stories), 1923.

Rough Justice (novel), 1926.

Right Off the Map (novel), 1927.

H. H. MUNRO ("Saki")
(1870-1916)

Though he was far too old for active service, this most promising humorist of the Edwardians enlisted in the 22nd Royal Fusiliers soon after the war began. Munro refused a commission, in spite of his being the son of an army officer. In November, 1915, he went to the front in France with the rank of corporal. He proved a fine soldier, surviving the physical rigours which broke the health of two of his literary contemporaries, C. E. Montague and Ford Madox Ford. But the war was not kind to him. On November 13, 1916, early in the morning, Munro was hit by a sniper's bullet. He died instantly. What might have come from his pen via these experiences thus never materialized. His death, like that of Julien Grenfell, Rupert Brooke, and Wilfred Owen, only represents the tragic price exacted by the war.

H. G. WELLS
(1886-1946)

Of the war Wells had this comment to make in Experiment in Autobiography (1934):

> No intelligent brain that passed through the experience of the Great War emerged without being profoundly changed. Our vision of life was revised in outline and detail alike. To me, as to most people, it was a revelation of

> the profound instability of the social order. It was also a revelation of the possibilities of fundamental reorganization that were now open to mankind--and of certain extraordinary weaknesses in the collective mentality.

The statement itself evokes an image of Wells the sociologist and reformer, and it is fair to say that with the coming of the war Wells the novelist, the author of Tono-Bungay and Ann Veronica, ceased almost to exist. Whether this shift was a natural development of the amazing thinker or one which was accelerated and necessitated by the war is impossible to say, but there can be no doubt that after the conflict began Wells wrote fiction only as a means of expounding his own peculiar brand of propaganda. During the war itself his "novels" tended more and more toward the discursive, until it was difficult to consider them as any more than Wellsian propaganda in the form of an essay faintly disguised as fiction.

He was prolific on the subject, as journalist, as political commentator, as essayist, as propagandist, and as a novelist.

His "fiction" is good evidence of the state of confusion and dismay the prolonged struggle caused him. Even his sturdy, scientific unbelief gave way temporarily in the face of the disaster. Through the last two years of the war he succumbed to the mysticism that so many of the older generation sought

solace in while their sons were being killed in France. In his own words, he "found God." A good account of his activities during the war can be found in his Experiment in Autobiography.

Principal works concerning the war:

Mr. Britling Sees It Through (novel), 1916.

The Soul of a Bishop (novel), 1917.

War and the Future (non-fiction), 1917.

Joan and Peter (novel), 1918.

In the Fourth Year (non-fiction), 1918.

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